NATION
Satara doc kills self, accuses 2 cops of rape in note on palm
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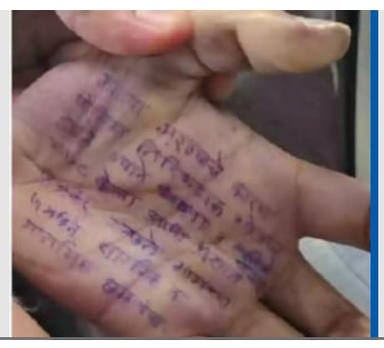

BUSINESS
India's manufacturing purchasing index rises to 2-month high
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SPORTS
India fret over bowling attack in Ro-Ko's Australian swansong
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SALAR
DIGITAL ENGLISH DAILY, BENGALURU

روزنامہ ساحل بنگلور

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20 killed as B'luru-bound bus catches fire in Andhra

Blaze was triggered after a bike went underneath the bus

A Hyderabad-bound private bus after it caught fire near Chinnatekur in Kurnool, Andhra Pradesh on Friday **PHOTO: PTI**

KURNOOL, 24 OCT

At least 20 people, including two children, were killed when a Bengaluru-bound private sleeper bus caught fire after colliding with a two-wheeler in Andhra Pradesh's Kurnool district early on Friday. Nine others sustained injuries.

The bus was travelling from Hyderabad to Bengaluru when the accident occurred around 3am near Chinnatekur village, reducing the vehicle to a charred metal frame.

Police said the blaze was triggered after the motorbike, whose fuel cap was open, was dragged underneath the bus, sparking a fire that quickly engulfed the vehicle. Most victims were charred beyond recognition, while survivors broke windows to escape.

The bus, carrying 44 passengers, was completely gutted within minutes. According to Kurnool Superintendent of Police Vikrant Patel, one of the drivers claimed the bike was already lying on the road, possibly due to an earlier mishap. A detailed investigation is under way.

Forensic teams were called in to collect DNA samples to identify victims. Officials said flammable materials used for the bus interiors, such as bedding and curtains, may have intensified the fire. Most survivors were aged between 25 and 35.

Home Minister V Anitha said a committee comprising officials from the transport, roads and revenue departments had been formed to probe the incident. Sixteen special teams will assist the investigation. The bus had a valid All India permit and fitness certificate, officials confirmed.

State Transport Minister M Ramprasad Reddy said Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu had announced Rs 5 lakh compensation for each deceased and Rs 2 lakh for the injured. Karnataka and Telangana governments also pledged similar ex-gratia payments. The victims included passengers from Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Odisha, Tamil Nadu and Bihar.

Nine injured persons are being treated, six at Kurnool Government General Hospital and three at a private facility. District Collector A Siri said all are stable and out of danger. Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced an additional Rs 2 lakh compensation from the Prime Minister's National Relief Fund for each deceased. *—PTI*

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Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Bihar CM Nitish Kumar share a garland during a rally, in Bihar's Samastipur **PHOTO: PTI**

PM SOUNDS POLL BUGLE IN BIHAR

SAMASTIPUR/ BEGUSARAI, 24 OCT

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday launched a high-decibel campaign in poll-bound Bihar, asserting that the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) led by Chief Minister Nitish Kumar would "break all previous electoral records" in the upcoming Assembly polls. Addressing large rallies in Samastipur and Begusarai, Modi reaffirmed that the NDA was contesting the election under Kumar's leadership, rejecting opposition claims that the BJP intended to replace him after the vote.

Drawing a sharp contrast between the ruling alliance and its rivals, the Prime Minister described the NDA as a "united, development-focused coalition," while terming the opposition INDIA bloc a "Mahalathbandhan" – a grand alliance of "corrupt leaders out on bail." He accused the RJD-Congress combine of having presided over "jungle raj" in the past and being insensitive to the people's needs.

Appealing to young voters, Modi urged them to "ensure prosperity by voting for good governance," reminding them that it was their parents who had ended "jungle raj" two decades earlier. *—PTI*

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Jaisalmer bus fire that killed 26 caused by short circuit: FSL

JAISALMER, 24 OCT

A forensic report has confirmed that the deadly bus fire near Thaiyat village in Jaisalmer, which killed 26 people on 14 October, was caused by a short circuit in the vehicle's air-conditioning system. The private bus, travelling to Jodhpur, caught fire just 10 minutes after departure. Investigators from the Jodhpur and Jaipur Forensic Science Laboratories found no explosives or firecrackers onboard. The fire originated from the roof-mounted AC unit, whose wiring was connected directly to the engine. Sparks caused smoke and carbon monoxide, suffocating passengers. *—PTI*

Actress Divya Suresh booked for hit-and-run

BENGALURU, 24 OCT

Bengaluru police on Friday said Kannada actress Divya Suresh is allegedly involved in a hit-and-run that injured three people in Byatarayanapura on 4 October. The victims, Kiran G, 25, and his cousins Anusha, 24, and Anitha, 33, were riding a motorcycle when a speeding black car struck them and immediately fled the scene. Kiran and Anusha sustained minor injuries and did not require hospitalisation, while Anitha suffered a broken leg. CCTV footage later identified the vehicle as belonging to Suresh, who was allegedly driving at the time. *—PTI*

MP bans carbide guns after 300 injured in MP

INDORE, 24 OCT

The Madhya Pradesh government has banned the sale, purchase, and storage of "carbide guns" after more than 300 people, mostly children, were injured during Deepavali, with at least 10 losing their eyesight. The guns, made from PVC pipes, lighters, and calcium carbide, produce explosions when water is added, sending plastic fragments that cause serious eye and skin injuries. Authorities warned that social media challenges fuelled the trend. Officials urged parents to prevent use and celebrate with safe, approved firecrackers only. Carbide guns are used primarily for creating loud, explosive noises to scare away animals from agricultural fields. *—Agencies*

Trump ends trade talks with Canada over tariff ad

WASHINGTON, 24 OCT

Canada trade tensions deepened on Thursday after President Donald Trump announced an end to "all trade negotiations" with Canada, accusing Ottawa of "egregious behaviour" over a television advert opposing US tariffs. Trump claimed on his social media site that the ad, produced by Ontario's government, "fraudulently" used an edited clip of Ronald Reagan speaking against tariffs. He said the ad aimed to "interfere with the decision of the US Supreme Court", declaring, "Based on their egregious behaviour, all trade negotiations with Canada are hereby terminated." *—PTI*

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GOYAL TO US, EU

'Won't trade with gun to our head'

BERLIN/NEW DELHI, 24 OCT

India will not rush while making trade deals, Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal said on Friday at the Berlin Global Dialogue, stressing long-term strategy. "We are in active dialogue with the EU. We are talking to the US, but we do not do deals in a hurry and we do not do deals with deadlines or with a gun to our head," he said. India is negotiating with the EU and the US while exploring new markets to counter high tariffs.

India and the US are 'very near' to concluding a bilateral trade agreement, an official said, with most issues resolved. Five rounds of talks have been completed since March, targeting to more than double trade to USD 500 billion by 2030. Goyal expressed hope for a fair, equitable deal soon. The US had imposed steep tariffs on Indian goods, including a 25 per cent levy on Russian crude oil imports, which India called 'unfair, unjustified, and unreasonable.' Maenwhile, White House Press Secretary Karoline Leavitt claimed India has begun 'scaling back' oil purchases from Russia at the request of US President Donald Trump. India, however, maintains that its energy policy prioritises national interest and secure, affordable supply. Meanwhile, an official said that India and the US are "very near" to concluding the proposed bilateral trade agreement, as both sides are converging on most issues.

EU trade talks

Ahead of the December-end FTA deadline, a seven-member EU panel will visit India from 27-29 October to advance negotiations, engaging with officials, industry bodies, and civil society to finalise a beneficial agreement. *—Agencies*

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Piyush Pandey known for Fevicol & Cadbury ads no more

MUMBAI, 24 OCT

Piyush Pandey, India's legendary adman who transformed the country's advertising landscape by infusing it with local language, humour, and emotion, died on Friday morning at the age of 70 after a brief illness.

Fondly known as the 'Father of Indian Advertising', Pandey broke away from English-centric campaigns to make Hindi the language of persuasion, giving India some of its most iconic ads — from Fevicol's "Jor laga ke haisha" and Asian Paints' "Har ghar kuch kehta hai" to Cadbury Dairy Milk's "Kuchh khaas hai zindagi mein".

Born in Jaipur, Pandey began his career at Ogilvy and went on to create unforgettable campaigns that blended wit, warmth, and Indian sensibility. He was also behind the political slogan "Abki Baar, Modi Sarkaar".

PM Narendra Modi condoled his death, calling him "a creative genius who made a monumental contribution to the world of advertising and communications."

Broadcaster Harsha Bhogle wrote on X: "He entered a profession that spoke in nuanced English, and gave it the beautiful flavour of his own language. He flew high, but his feet never left the soil of his culture." *—PTI*

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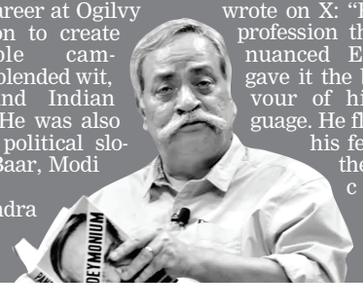

JKNC's Gurwinder Singh Oberoi, centre, celebrates after his victory in RS election in Srinagar on Friday **PHOTO: PTI**

NC wins 3 J&K seats in 1st RS polls since '19

SRINAGAR, 24 OCT

National Conference (NC) won three of the four Rajya Sabha seats in Jammu and Kashmir's first Upper House elections since it became a Union Territory, while the BJP secured one seat, re-portedly aided by cross-voting and abstentions.

Polling was held on Friday under three notifications. In the first contest, NC's Chowdhary Mohammed Ram-zan defeated BJP's Ali Mohammed Mir with 58 votes against 28. In the second, NC's Sajjad Kitchloo beat BJP's Rakesh Mahajan with 57 votes to 28, while one NC vote was rejected.

For the third notification, NC fielded GS (Shammi) Oberoi and Imran Nabi Dar, while the BJP nominated its J&K unit chief Sat Sharma. Sharma won with 32 votes, reportedly boosted by support from Independent MLAs, while Oberoi and Dar secured 31 and 21 votes respectively. Three ballots were rejected.

Chief Minister Omar Abdullah congratulated the winning NC candidates, asserting that all party votes re-mained intact. "There was no cross-voting from our MLAs," he said, questioning the source of the BJP's four extra votes and accusing some legislators of "selling their souls".

The NC's prospects were strengthened by the Awami Ittehad Party MLA Sheikh Khursheed, who backed the ruling party "to keep the BJP out", and by the PDP's Waheed Para, who said his party voted for the NC "in the larger interest of Jammu and Kashmir". *—PTI*

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112 DRUGS FAIL QUALITY TESTS

CHHATTISGARH, 24 OCT

The Central Drugs Standards Control Organisation (CDSCO) has flagged one spurious cough syrup and 112 substandard drug batches during its September, 2025 checks. The spurious syrup, Besto-Cof (Dry Cough Formula), was detected in a Chhattisgarh lab. BestoChem Formulations, the actual manufacturer, confirmed the batch was not theirs. Spurious drugs are made by unauthorised producers using another company's brand. The 112 substandard formulations, tested in central and state labs, include paracetamol, pantoprazole, multivitamins, Telmisartan, and diclofenac. They failed quality parameters such as dissolution, weight uniformity, and active ingredient assay. The Union Health Ministry said the failures are batch-specific and do not affect other market products. Action will follow under the Drugs and Cosmetics Act, with continued surveillance to ensure medicine safety and quality. *—Agencies*

SALES FOR PURIFIERS SKYROCKET

Delhi's air quality stns riddled with faulty displays, dead monitors

NEW DELHI, 24 OCT

As Delhi chokes on toxic air, an investigation has revealed widespread negligence at several air quality monitoring stations.

From Narela to Shahdara and RK Puram to Punjabi Bagh, malfunctioning or hidden display boards, misplaced sensors, and data discrepancies undermine public awareness and accountability, revealed India Today report.

According to In Narela, the monitor sits amid dense greenery at an ITI campus, with an anti-smog gun operating nearby and a dead display board. Aya Nagar's display has been defunct for 18 months, while the RK Puram unit lies hidden behind trees and has not worked since Diwali. In Bawana, the machine is surrounded by trees, giving misleadingly "clean" readings, and its display is dead. Punjabi Bagh's monitor was found shut even as CPCB data showed "very poor" air quality.

Several display boards meant to inform the public about AQI levels were found to be either defunct, hidden or glitching **PHOTO: SCREENGRAB**

Stations at Karkardooma, Shahdara, Lodhi Road, and ITO displayed outdated readings, with data stuck since 22 October. At Najafgarh, the board worked locally but data was missing online. Only Okhla Industrial Area's DPCC unit was fully functional, matching official readings and operating round the clock.

Meanwhile, as Delhi's AQI touched 354, the season's highest, sales of air purifiers and masks surged 60–70 per cent, traders said. Electronics stores reported record demand, with some selling up to 40 purifiers in two days. Pharmacies saw mask sales jump by 40 per cent.

With poor dispersion conditions expected to persist, Delhi's failing monitoring system leaves citizens struggling for both clean air and credible data. *—Salar News*

Govt clears Rs 27,607 crore proposals creating 8.7K jobs

CM warns of action against officials delaying investment approvals

BENGALURU, 24 OCT

Karnataka on Friday approved 13 major investment proposals worth Rs 27,607.26 crore, expected to create 8,704 direct jobs, even as Chief Minister Siddaramaiah warned officials against delays in project approvals.

The clearances were granted at the 66th meeting of the State High-Level Clearance Committee (SHLCC) chaired by the Chief Minister. The approvals include 11 new projects and two additional investment proposals, said Large and Medium Industries Minister MB Patil.

The new proposals, worth Rs 27,228.51 crore, include: Vayu Assets Pvt Ltd (Rs 1,251 crore; 1,912 jobs), Tejas Networks Ltd (Rs 542.19 crore; 1,312 jobs), Reliance Consumer Products Ltd (Rs 1,622 crore; 1,200 jobs), JSW JFE Electrical Steel Pvt Ltd (Rs 7,102 crore; 900 jobs), HSS Textile Pvt Ltd (Rs 740 crore; 800 jobs) and SFX India Mfg Pvt Ltd (Rs 9,298 crore; 806 jobs).

Additional investments include Embassy Industrial Park (Rs 80 crore) and Balaji Wafers Pvt Ltd (Rs 298.75 crore).

At the meeting in Vidhana Soudha, Siddaramaiah cautioned officials against citing court orders as excuses for delays, stressing that "under no circumstances should there be any scope for delay." He directed departments to reduce timelines for issuing NOCs, including for land use changes, and to submit detailed proposals for expediting the process.

Minister MB Patil, Chief Minister Siddaramaiah and Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar **PHOTO: PTI**

- The CM also called for better coordination among departments to ensure timely provision of infrastructure such as roads, water and electricity, and urged amendments to speed up clearances from the Pollution Control Board and Fire Department.

The CM also called for better coordination among departments to ensure timely provision of infrastructure such as roads, water and electricity, and urged amendments to speed up clearances from the Pollution Control Board and Fire Department.

Highlighting the state's investment momentum, Siddaramaiah said Rs 10.27 lakh crore worth of proposals were attracted during the Global Investors' Meet, with around 60 per cent already under implementation, while projects worth over Rs 1.5 lakh crore are in various stages of clearance.

IT-BT Minister Priyank Kharge emphasised that faster approvals would sustain employment growth, noting that Karnataka's 37 SEZs contribute 8.2 per cent to state GDP, nearly matching Tamil Nadu's 8.9 per cent from 51 SEZs. *—PTI*

DISMISSING SPECULATION

Yathindra didn't say 'so-and-so' must become CM: Siddaramaiah

BENGALURU, 24 OCT

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah on Friday clarified that his son, MLC **Yathindra Siddaramaiah**, did not name anyone as his successor, dismissing speculation triggered by his recent remarks.

Yathindra had said at a Chikkodi event on Wednesday that Minister Satish Jarkiholi was a leader with "progressive ideological thinking" similar to his father's, adding that Siddaramaiah was at the "fag end" of his political career.

The comment was widely interpreted as an endorsement of Jarkiholi as Siddaramaiah's successor, amid ongoing speculation that Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar might take over in November under a reported rotational chief ministership formula.

Addressing reporters, Siddaramaiah accused the media of twisting his son's statement.

"He spoke only about principles. He did not say that 'so-and-so' should become chief minister," he said, reiterating that he intends to complete his five-year term.

Shivakumar, responding to the controversy, said he would "speak to the person who should be spoken to" but declined further comment. The Congress high command has not confirmed any leadership change, though internal rivalries between the two leaders continue to fuel speculation.

Recently, two Congress MLAs were served notices for openly backing Shivakumar as the next chief min-ister. *—PTI*

JARKIHOLI IN NO RUSH FOR CM POST, EYES FULL TERM

BELAGAVI, 24 OCT

Congress heavyweight and influential North Karnataka leader Satish Jarkiholi has reportedly decided not to pursue the chief Minister's post before the 2028 Assembly elections, preferring instead to aim for a full five-year term thereafter.

Sources close to the Jarkiholi family said the minister believes taking charge now would offer only a brief stint, limiting his influence and legacy. "If the chief minister's post comes now, it's only for a few months. I'm more interested in the full term after 2028," he is learnt to have told associates.

Party insiders view his move as a strategic calculation. Should Chief Minister Siddaramaiah step down early, his deputy DK Shivakumar is expected to take over, making him the natural choice for the 2028 race. However, if Siddaramaiah continues until late in his term, Jarkiholi could emerge as a key contender for the next tenure. A close aide of Siddaramaiah, Jarkiholi recognises that unseating both the chief minister and State party chief is impractical for now. Instead, he is focusing on consolidating his base in north Karnataka, where he commands support from 40–45 MLAs, and is eyeing the KPCC president's post to strengthen his hold over the party machinery.

His goal, insiders say, is to expand his influence to secure 60–65 seats in 2028, a target that could make him a formidable chief minister candidate.

Party observers believe Siddaramaiah may even favour this long-term arrangement, potentially paving the way for Jarkiholi to assume leadership after the next elections if Congress retains power. *—Salar News*

Two men stabbed outside bar in Mangaluru

MANGALURU, 24 OCT

Two men sustained injuries after allegedly being stabbed during a brawl outside a bar here, police said on Friday. The incident occurred on Thursday night in Surathkal area of Mangaluru, they said. According to police, Mukheed and Nizam were drinking at the bar. A quarrel reportedly broke out between them and four unidentified men who had also come to the bar. The confrontation escalated after they stepped outside, leading to the attack. One of the assailants allegedly used a knife, normally used for cutting flex banners, to stab Nizam in the abdomen and near his ear, while Mukheed sustained an injury on his hand. Both are out of danger, a senior police officer said. The four suspects involved in the incident have been identified, he said. *—PTI*

The farmer appealed to Union ministers from State to push for the compensation for crop loss **PHOTO: SALAR**

Mysuru farmers protest against Centre over aid

MYSURU, 24 OCT

Farmers under the banner of the State Sugarcane Farmers Association protested in Mysuru on Friday, demanding a revision of the compensation provided for crop loss under the National Disaster Relief Fund (NDRF).

They said the rates, fixed eight years ago, were outdated and failed to reflect current realities.

Protesters shouted slogans against the Union government for not revising the compensation provided to farmers and those affected by floods, droughts, and other natural disasters. They urged amendments to the NDRF law to ensure higher payouts.

The farmers also demanded a special compensation package of Rs 5,000 crore for those affected by floods in Kalyana Karnataka and North Karnataka, similar to the relief extended to Punjab farmers. They appealed to Union ministers from State to push for the package.

Addressing the gathering, State Sugarcane Growers Association president Kurubur Shanthakumar criticised the Centre for following "unscientific" guidelines and demanded compensation of Rs 25,000 per acre for rain-fed crops, Rs 40,000 for irrigated crops, and Rs 60,000 for commercial crops.

He further sought a crop loan waiver, resumption of MNREGA schemes for agriculture and horticulture, and an increase in Fair and Remunerative Price (FRP) for sugarcane. He also called on the State to install sugarcane weighing machines near mills to prevent cheating and to open paddy procurement centres in every taluk, offering Rs 2,369 per quintal plus a Rs 500 incentive. *—Salar News*

- Addressing the gathering, State Sugarcane Growers Association president Kurubur Shanthakumar criticised the Centre for following "unscientific" guidelines and demanded compensation of Rs 25,000 per acre for rain-fed crops

Patil seeks EC probe into 'vote chori' claims in Aland

BENGALURU, 24 OCT

State Minister **MB Patil** on Friday urged the Election Commission of India (ECI) to take responsibility and order an inquiry into the alleged 'vote chori' (vote theft) after a Special Investigation Team (SIT) found attempts to delete over 6,000 voter names in the Aland Assembly segment ahead of the 2023 polls.

Patil, who holds the industries and infrastructure portfolio, said the SIT findings vindicate Congress leader Rahul Gandhi's long-standing claims about electoral manipulation by the BJP. "Now the truth has come out. This is what Rahul Gandhi has been saying all along, how the BJP came to power, its sins and illegalities. The ECI demanded proof; now we have it," he told reporters.

According to the SIT, six suspects were paid around Rs 80 for each deleted voter name, with 6,994 removal requests found largely bogus. CID sources said the deletions were planned systematically.

Patil accused the BJP and ECI of ignoring earlier warnings. "If this vote chori can happen in Aland, it can happen anywhere in India," he said.

Aland, in Kalaburagi district, Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge's home turf, is represented by Congress MLA BR Patil, who won by about 10,000 votes and said he would have lost had the deletions succeeded. *—PTI*

LIFE OF PROPHET MUHAMMAD

Visitors explore the Seerah Exhibition at Neelasandra in Bengaluru on Friday, showcasing the life of Prophet Muhammad through visual models and sound effects. Clockwise from top: A replica of Medina; visitors enjoy a virtual reality experience of the Mecca Royal Clock Tower, the world's tallest clock tower that is visible from 25km away; Ministers BZ Zameer Ahmed Khan and Rahim Khan, MLA NA Haris, CM's Political Secretary Naseer Ahmed check out a display; women attend the four-day event **PHOTOS: MOHAMMED ASAD**

KSDL pays record Rs 135 crore dividend to State

BENGALURU, 24 OCT

Public sector firm Karnataka Soaps and Detergents Limited (KSDL) on Friday handed over a dividend of Rs 135 crore to the State Government from its 2024–25 profits, the highest in its history. Large and Medium Industries Minister MB Patil and KSDL Chairman Appaji Nadagouda presented the cheque to Chief Minister Siddaramaiah at Vidhana Soudha. Patil said KSDL, maker of the iconic Mysore Sandal Soap, achieved a record turnover of Rs 1,700 crore and a profit of Rs 451 crore in the last fiscal. As per norms, 30 per cent of profits were paid to the state as a dividend. "This marks an all-time record for the company in turnover, profit, and dividend," Patil said. The dividend rose from Rs 54 crore in 2022–23 to Rs 108 crore in 2023–24, reflecting a Rs 27-crore increase this year. Patil expressed confidence that KSDL's dividend contribution would continue to grow in the coming years. *—PTI*

TO FACE GLOBAL THREATS

IAF Chief calls for military training overhaul

BENGALURU, 24 OCT

Air Chief Marshal AP Singh on Friday underscored the need to transform military training to keep the Indian Air Force (IAF) adaptable, efficient, and combat-ready amid evolving global threats and emerging technologies.

He was speaking at the Training Command Commanders' Conference 2025, held at the IAF Headquarters Training Command in Bengaluru on 23–24 October. The two-day event was attended by commanders from all training establishments under the command.

According to an official statement, discussions focused on transforming training philosophy, modernising infrastructure, and aligning instructional methods with the IAF's operational requirements.

Chief of Air Staff, Air Chief Marshal AP Singh **PHOTO: ANI**

The Chief of the Air Staff (CAS) reviewed the performance of all training establishments, lauding their achievements while identifying areas for improvement. He praised the Training Command for its commitment to excellence and reiterated that continuous transformation in training was crucial to meet future challenges.

As part of the event, the CAS presented awards recognising excellence in operations, maintenance, and administration. The Air Force Academy received the 'Pride of the Training Command' trophy for outstanding performance, the statement said. *—PTI*

SIT brings Potty to B'luru in Sabarimala gold row

PATHANAMTHITTA, 24 OCT

The Special Investigation Team (SIT) probing the Sabarimala temple gold loss on Friday took prime accused Unnikrishnan Potty to Bengaluru for evidence collection, officials said. The team, accompanied by Potty, departed the Crime Branch office in Thiruvananthapuram early morning.

Potty's custody, granted by the Judicial First-Class Magistrate Court in Ranni, extends till 30 October. SIT aims to complete evidence collection before the custody expires, sources said.

According to the investigation, Potty received gold-clad plates of the Dwarapalaka (guardian deity) for electroplating in 2019 from the Travancore Devaswom Board (TDB). He reportedly displayed the plates in Chennai, Bengaluru, and Kerala.

Based in Bengaluru, Potty had previously worked at a temple there, and some of his Sabarimala-related works were funded by individuals in State. He is the prime accused in two cases involving missing gold from Dwarapalaka plates and Sreekovil door frames, and is currently under arrest for the Dwarapalaka plates case. *—PTI*

Working to empower youth: PM at Rozgar Mela

NEW DELHI, 24 OCT

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday said the BJP-led NDA government is committed to empowering India's youth and expanding job opportunities through multiple initiatives. Addressing the 17th Rozgar Mela via a recorded message, the Prime Minister announced that over 51,000 candidates received appointment letters, taking the total number of recruitments through Rozgar Melas to more than 11 lakh. Modi launched the Pratibha Setu Portal, aimed at connecting candidates who narrowly missed government jobs with opportunities in the private sector. He said India's foreign policy and investment partnerships with Brazil, Singapore, South Korea, and Canada are creating new employment avenues. GST reforms are boosting demand, manufacturing, and MSME growth, he said.—*PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

SIT of CID, WB cops to probe cases against Suvendu

KOLKATA, 24 OCT

The Calcutta High Court on Friday ordered that investigations in four cases against BJP leader Suvendu Adhikari be transferred to a joint Special Investigation Team (SIT) comprising the CBI and West Bengal police. Justice Jay Sengupta lifted a 2022 protection that had prevented FIRs against Adhikari without the court's approval. The order covers three cases between the BJP leader and the state government. The court also quashed FIRs in 15 other cases filed across West Bengal. In December, 2022, Justice Rajasekhar Mantha had granted Adhikari, Leader of Opposition in the West Bengal Assembly, protection from FIR registration, noting that multiple complaints that had been filed appeared aimed at restricting his duties.—*PTI*

Congress leader evicted from govt home over caste

NEW DELHI, 24 OCT

Congress leader and former MP Udit Raj on Friday alleged his family was forcibly evicted from their Pandara Park government bungalow in New Delhi, despite the case being sub-judice. The bungalow, allotted to his wife Seema Raj, a retired IRS officer, had its licence fee paid till 31 May. Raj claimed the eviction was "punishment" for being Dalit and a voice for the poor, calling it "selective" and "motivated," while upper-caste occupants remain. Seema Raj said she requested time until November-end to wind up affairs after her father's recent death, but notices were issued before the court hearing. Raj shared a video showing household items on the street. —*PTI*

11 booked for casteist assault of M'rashtra man

MUMBAI, 24 OCT

Maharashtra police in Ahilyanagar district have booked 11 individuals for allegedly kidnapping and assaulting a 22-year-old man over his caste. The attack occurred on October 19 at Sonai village, Newasa tehsil, when the victim and a friend were near a hospital. Sambhaji Lande, the main accused with a past rivalry, reportedly led the group in beating the victim with sticks and fists and urinating on him. The victim was later thrown from a vehicle near a college ground. Three accused, including Lande, have been arrested, while searches continue for the others. They face various charges. Dalit leader Prakash Ambedkar has urged action under the Maharashtra Control of Organised Crime Act (MCOCA).—*PTI*

Allying with RJD was a mistake: Nitish

Nitish Kumar allied with RJD in 2015, broke ties with it in 2017 & reunited briefly in 2022

SAMASTIPUR, 24 OCT

Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar on Friday asserted that Bihar was making progress with generous help from the Narendra Modi government at the Centre and urged the people to vote for the NDA in the assembly elections.

The JD(U) President addressed a rally in Samastipur district, from where the Prime Minister launched his campaign for the high-stakes elections.

Kumar lambasted RJD president Lalu Prasad, whom he did not mention by name, for misgoverning the state and "making his wife the chief minister when he had to step down".

The longest-serving Chief Minister was referring to the resignation of Prasad from the post of chief minister in 1997, following a CBI charge-sheet in fodder scam cases, and the taking over of Rabri Devi.

Kumar added, "He has not mended his ways. He is now busy backing sons and daughters".

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday paid tribute to former Bihar chief minister and Bharat Ratna awardee Karpoori Thakur during his visit to Karpoori Gram in Samastipur in Bihar. However, the Congress said that the Jan Sangh brought down Thakur's government in Bihar in April 1979 when he had introduced reservation for OBCs ***PHOTO: PTI***

The allusion was to Tejashwi Yadav, the INDIA bloc's chief ministerial candidate, and Misa Bharti, the Pataliputra MP.

"..... and I was better off in the coalition I had been a part of since the beginning", said the JD(U) president, who has been an NDA partner, for the most part, since the 1990s.

Nitish first joined hands with RJD in 2015 after breaking ranks with NDA. He broke ties with the party in 2017, reunited briefly in 2022 and split again in January 2024.

Meanwhile, RJD leader and INDIA block's chief ministerial candidate Tejashwi Yadav made sarcastic jibes at Nitish's political flipflops.

"Uncle (Nitish Kumar)'s nature changes again and again — from this side to that side," Tejashwi said.

Meanwhile, the CPI (ML) Liberation will carry out a 'Sankalp Yatra' in Bhojpur on 26 October to mark the 15th death anniversary of its Dalit leader Ram Naresh Ram, and will launch its 'Sankalp Patra' for the polls. —*PTI*

Nitish won't be Bihar CM if NDA wins: Tejashwi

PATNA, 24 OCT

- Yadav said that Kumar has been "hijacked" by the BJP, specifically referring to Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

Asserting that Bihar remains a "poor" state despite two decades of JD(U)-led NDA governance, RJD leader Tejashwi Yadav declared on Friday that Chief Minister Nitish Kumar will not be appointed as chief minister again if the ruling alliance is re-elected.

Yadav alleged that Kumar has been "hijacked" by the BJP, specifically referring to Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Home Minister Amit Shah as "controlling" Bihar from Gujarat.

Addressing a rally in Saharsa, he remarked, "Amit Shah has made it clear that elected legislators will decide the CM of Bihar after elections."

Promising a clean government if elected, he emphasised the need for a "Bihari" leader over "Bahri" (outsiders) and claimed, "What the NDA government has failed to do in 20 years, I will do in 20 months."

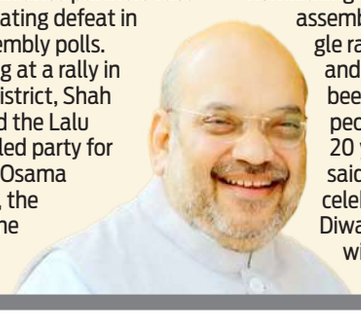
Yadav committed to lowering LPG cylinder prices to Rs 500, boosting pensions and regularising workers. He noted his previous achievements as deputy CM. —*PTI*

BIHAR WILL CELEBRATE DIWALI WHEN RJD LOSES: SHAH

SIWAN, 24 OCT

Union Home Minister Amit Shah has asserted that Bihar will celebrate a "real Diwali" on 14 November, when the Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD) and its alliance partners face a humiliating defeat in the assembly polls.

Speaking at a rally in Siwan district, Shah criticised the Lalu Prasad-led party for fielding Osama Shahab, the son of the former gangster- turned-politician Mohammad Shahabuddin.



"People here must ensure that Shahabuddin's son, contesting from the Raghunathpur seat, faces a humiliating defeat in the assembly polls. The 'jungle raj' of Lalu Prasad and Rabri Devi has been endured by the people of Siwan for 20 years," he said. He said people would celebrate a "real Diwali" when results will be out. —*PTI*

PRASHANT BACKS REBEL BJP CANDIDATE IN GOPALGANJ

GOPALGANJ, 24 OCT

Jan Suraaj Party founder Prashant Kishor on Friday announced his support for rebel Independent candidate Anup Kumar Srivastava in Gopalganj, Bihar, alleging BJP pressure forced the party's nominee, Shashi Shekhar Sinha, to withdraw. Kishor described Srivastava, a former district BJP president and social worker, as an "exception" to his party's policy of not giving tickets to defectors.

Kishor claimed BJP leaders tried to poach candidates and said Jan Suraaj would fully support Srivastava despite his Independent status.

"We want to give BJP a taste of its own medicine," he said. —*PTI*

CONG PAYING SITARAM KESRI TRIBUTES TO WIN POLLS: BJP

NEW DELHI, 24 OCT

The BJP criticised Congress leaders, including Rahul Gandhi, for paying tributes to former party president Sitaram Kesri on his 25th death anniversary, calling it a politically motivated gesture ahead of Bihar elections. BJP spokesperson Shehzad Poonawalla accused Rahul Gandhi of "pretending" to honour Kesri, recalling the former leader's alleged humiliation in 1998 when Sonia Gandhi took over Congress. BJP IT head Amit Malviya said the party has a history of exploiting leaders from deprived backgrounds. Kesri, a Bihar native, led Congress from 1996–1998; Bihar polls are on 6 and 11 November—*PTI*

NC candidate alleges BJP horse-trading in Jammu & Kashmir

NEW DELHI, 24 OCT

National Conference (NC) candidate Imran Nabi Dar on Friday accused the BJP of horse-trading after it won one of the four Rajya Sabha seats in Jammu and Kashmir's first such election since the abrogation of Article 370 in 2019.

Dar, who lost to BJP's J&K president Sat Sharma, claimed that four MLAs who had pledged support to the NC cross-voted.

"The BJP had only 28 MLAs, how did they get 32? It's clear horse-trading happened," Dar told reporters.

"They must have bought four votes. Those who betrayed us should admit it if they have any shame left," he said.

The NC won three of the four seats, while the BJP secured one, reportedly aided by Independent votes and abstentions. Dar said the BJP "used all its resources" to grab the seat despite lacking the numbers. He added that the NC would work to "expose who cross-voted".

Meanwhile, Jammu and Kashmir People's Conference (JKPC) chief Sajad Lone described the polls as a "fixed match" between the NC and BJP.

> **Under Prime Minister Modi's leadership and after the abrogation of Article 370, the destiny of Jammu and Kashmir has changed. The Union Territory is moving forward on the path of peace and development**
>
> - Kiren Rijiju, Union Minister

"As predicted — a fixed match, an axis of evil," Lone posted on X, questioning why the NC polled extra votes for its third candidate.

Lone, who abstained from voting, said the outcome mathematically proved a pre-arranged result.

Jammu and Kashmir had remained unrepresented in the Rajya Sabha since February 2021, the day when Ghulam Nabi Azad and Nazir Ahmad Laway completed their terms in the Upper House.

Two other members, Fayaz Ahmed Mir and Shamsheer Singh Manhas completed their terms on 10 February in the same year. —*PTI*

NEED FOR REFORMS

All is not well with United Nations: EAM Jaishankar

NEW DELHI, 24 OCT

India on Friday cited Pakistan's attempts to protect at the United Nations Security Council the terror outfit that claimed responsibility for the Pahalgam attack to point out that the all is not well within the global body as its works have been "gridlocked" in the absence of urgent reforms.

External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar also criticised those equating victims and perpetrators of terrorism in the name of global strategy while speaking at an event to mark the 80th anniversary of the UN.

He said UN's debates have become "increasingly polarised." Sustaining the UN even while seeking its re-invention is clearly a major challenge before the world.

The Resistance Front (TRF), a proxy of the Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) terror group, had claimed responsibility for the Pahalgam terror attack.

TRF found mention in a UNSC report in July for its role in the Pahalgam attack.

Pakistan had attempted to remove references to TRF in the UNSC press statement condemning the Pahalgam attack.

In his remarks, Jaishankar suggested that the UN has failed to address pressing issues.

"If the maintenance of international peace and security has become lip service, the predicament of development and socio-economic progress is even more serious," he said.

"The slowing down of the SDG Agenda 2030 is a significant metric to measure the distress of the Global South. There are many more like trade measures, supply chain dependence," he said. —*PTI*

Gaza peace deal to bring stability in Middle East: India

UNITED NATIONS, 24 OCT

At the United Nations Security Council on 24 October, India hailed the newly signed Gaza Peace Agreement as a "landmark" step toward stability in the Middle East.

Ambassador Parvathaneni Harish reiterated that the two-state solution is "the only pragmatic path" to ensure lasting peace between Israel and Palestine.

Harish expressed India's desire for a peaceful Middle East, stating, "Deprivation and indignity cannot be part of daily life; civilians must not die due to conflict."

He commended the diplomatic efforts led by the US, especially President Donald Trump, alongside Egypt and Qatar.

He warned against any actions that might derail ongoing peace efforts, emphasising India's support for a sovereign Palestine.

Highlighting humanitarian assistance, Harish noted India's contributions of over USD 170 million to Palestine, advocating for economic frameworks to aid recovery.

Harish also touched upon broader regional issues, including Syria, Lebanon, and Yemen. He also underlined India's continuing humanitarian and peace keeping contributions. —*PTI*

Jubilee Hills bypoll: 25 candidates in fray

HYDERABAD, 24 OCT

As many as 58 candidates are in the fray for the 11 November bypoll to Jubilee Hills assembly constituency in Telangana after the withdrawal of nominations on Friday.

While 211 candidates filed their nominations, only 81 were accepted.

Of the 81, 23 withdrew their candidatures, leaving 58 in the contest.

As part of enforcement of the Model Code of Conduct cash, liquor and others worth over Rs 2.82 crore were seized.

Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation commissioner RV Karnan, said all arrangements have been completed for the 407 polling station. The bypoll was necessitated due to the death of BRS MLA Maganti Gopinath following a heart attack in June. —*PTI*

FOR PROBING CORRUPTION

'Officer, cops drove Haryana ASI to suicide'

CHANDIGARH, 24 OCT

"Undue pressure" by Amneet P Kumar, the wife of deceased IPS officer Y Puran Kumar, and MLA Amit Rattan and two other cops "forced" assistant sub-inspector Sandeep Kumar Lathar to end his life, according to an FIR registered in the suicide case.

The FIR was lodged based on a complaint by Lathar's wife, who has levelled serious allegations against Amneet Kumar, an IAS officer, and her brother, who is the MLA from Bathinda Rural.

Puran Kumar, too, committed suicide in Chandigarh.

Sandeep's wife, Santosh, has also sought a CBI probe into the entire episode.

ASI Lathar, who was posted in the cyber cell in Rohtak, had allegedly shot himself dead on 14 October. He left behind a note, levelling corruption allegations against Puran Kumar and made a reference to Amneet in a video.

ASI Lathar had played a role in the arrest of head constable Sushil Kumar, who was Puran Kumar's gunman.

Sushil was arrested in connection with a case pertaining to a bribery complaint filed by a liquor contractor. The contractor alleged that Sushil Kumar had sought Rs 2.5 lakh in the name of Puran Kumar when he was posted in Rohtak.

Sandeep Kumar Lathar ***PHOTO:PTI***

An abetment of suicide case was filed in connection with Lathar's following a complaint by his wife, Santosh.

- ASI Lathar, posted in the cyber cell in Rohtak, had allegedly shot himself dead. He left behind a note, levelling corruption allegations against Puran Kumar.

Santosh alleged that before and after the registration of the corruption case, Sushil; Sunil Kumar, another cop and others "were continuously pressuring and threatening" her husband.

"The threats were made citing the influence of Amneet and her brother, MLA Amit Rattan and their relatives in the Scheduled Castes Commission because my husband Sandeep was involved in the investigation of this case," Santosh alleged. —*PTI*

Rift in Kerala's Left as CPI slams PM SHRI pact

T'PURAM, 24 OCT

A major rift has surfaced within Kerala's ruling CPI(M)-led Left Front after the state General Education Department signed an agreement with the Centre to join the PM SHRI Schools scheme, provoking sharp criticism from ally, the Communist Party of India (CPI).

CPI MP P Santosh Kumar called the move "a self-goal," demanding CPI(M) leader MA Baby provide a detailed explanation.

The controversy arose after the Left Democratic Front (LDF) government proceeded without consulting the state Cabinet, despite CPI having previously blocked the scheme twice.

Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan's government decided to join the Pradhan Mantri Schools for Rising India (PM SHRI) project, which, under the National Education Policy, will upgrade infrastructure in two schools per block with central funding of about Rs 1Cr per school annually for five years.

P Santosh Kumar ***PHOTO:ANI***

CPI warned the decision could open the door to NEP implementation in Kerala, long resisted by the Left, and expressed unease over mandatory PM SHRI branding. With elections approaching, the dispute exposes cracks in the ruling coalition. —*PTI*

5 die after eating post-funeral food in Chhattisgarh

NARAYANPUR, 24 OCT

Five persons died in one week and many were taken ill after they allegedly consumed contaminated food at a post-funeral feast in Dunga village in Chhattisgarh's Narayanpur district. The victims, including a two-month-old infant, Budhari, Budharam, Lakkhe and Urmila died in a week. Narayanpur Chief Medical and Health Officer, TR Kunwar said after they received reports of deaths caused by contaminated food in the village on 21 October, a health team visited the village and treated the affected people during a health camp. Villagers had attended the feast on 14 October and five people died within a week after suffering from vomiting and diarrhoea. The health team was monitoring the situation. *—PTI*

PHOTO: INSTAGRAM

Singer Sachin Sanghvi held for sexual assault

MUMBAI, 24 OCT

Bollywood singer and music composer Sachin Sanghvi has been arrested for allegedly sexually assaulting a woman by promising her a chance in a music album and marriage. Sanghvi, known for hit songs in 'Stree 2' and 'Bhediya', was arrested on 23 October under relevant sections of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita. The police said that the complainant, in her 20s, claimed she came in contact with Sanghvi in February, 2024, and he had sent her a message on Instagram. The singer-composer allegedly promised her a chance in his music album and they exchanged phone numbers. Sanghvi allegedly called her to his studio, where he proposed marriage, and sexually assaulted her on multiple occasions. *—PTI*

Kerala HC rejects Mohanlal's ivory ownership docs

KOCHI, 24 OCT

The Kerala High Court on Friday held that the Forest Department's ownership certificates for ivory items in the possession of actor Mohanlal were void and legally unenforceable. The court, however, clarified that the State Government may issue a fresh notification under Section 40(4) of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972, if it wishes to allow the actor to retain the ivory articles. The ruling came on a petition filed by Paulose KA challenging the government's notifications that had allowed Mohanlal to declare two pairs of ivory tusks and 13 ivory artefacts before the Chief Wildlife Warden and obtain ownership certificates, even though criminal proceedings related to the ivories were pending. *—PTI*

PHOTO: INSTAGRAM

Sushant Singh's family challenges CBI closure report

NEW DELHI, 24 OCT

Nearly five years after Sushant Singh Rajput's death, his family has challenged the CBI's closure report, calling it "incomplete and inconclusive." Advocate Varun Singh alleged key annexures were withheld despite six Patna court orders. The March 2025 report cleared Rhea Chakraborty and others but admitted that "the possibility of suicide cannot be ruled out." Singh said the family cannot file a protest petition without full access to documents and questioned missing financial and digital evidence. "The CBI took five years, yet filed an incomplete report," he added. *—PTI*

Kurnool bus fire: Many die in sleep, others suffer injuries

Survivors are stable; authorities continue to identify victims

KURNOOL, 24 OCT

For many passengers aboard the ill-fated Hyderabad–Bengaluru sleeper bus, what began as a routine overnight journey turned into a nightmare within seconds.

Several were fast asleep and died without realising what was happening when the bus caught fire around 3am on Friday after a motorcycle collision near Kurnool. Twenty passengers died on the spot, most charred beyond recognition.

Survivors recounted panic, shattered glass, and desperate leaps to safety. Nellore-based IT professional S Harika said, "When I opened my eyes, fire had already spread. Someone broke the rear door, and we all jumped out. I suffered a minor injury."

Surya from Hyderabad fractured both legs jumping from nearly 15 feet. "I was headed to Bengaluru for a job interview. The bus was filled with smoke, and within seconds it was on fire," he said. Kurnool Collector A Siri confirmed 41 people were onboard, including the driver.

Kurnool District Collector A Siri (in purple suit) speaks with police personnel at the spot after a Hyderabad-bound private bus caught fire, near Chinnatekur in Kurnool district, Andhra Pradesh **PHOTO: PTI**

Survivors are stable and receiving treatment, while authorities continue identifying victims. Most of them were young professionals returning to Bengaluru. "Many were asleep and had no time to react," an official noted. Families can contact helpline: Sriramachandra (9912919545) and E Chittibabu (9440854433). *—PTI*

'FIRST' IN CAPITAL

Delhi tests 'cloud seeding' to curb winter pollution

NEW DELHI, 24 OCT

Chief Minister Rekha Gupta on Friday said that the first cloud-seeding trial in Delhi marks a major step toward tackling winter air pollution.

The pilot experiment, conducted over the Burari area on Thursday, aimed to assess the feasibility of inducing artificial rain to wash away pollutants.

"This is a first for Delhi," Gupta said. "We believe this technology can help reduce pollution and manage environmental challenges during winter."

The project, developed jointly by IIT-Kanpur and the Delhi government, released small amounts of silver iodide and sodium chloride from a Cessna aircraft to stimulate rainfall. However, officials said limited moisture, less than 20 per cent, prevented precipitation, as at least 50 per cent humidity is needed for successful seeding.

According to IIT-K's report, the flight served as a proving mission to test aircraft endurance, equipment functionality, and inter-agency coordination. The Rs 3.21 crore project involves five approved trials. Minister Manjinder Singh Sirsa said more trials are planned in northwest Delhi once weather conditions improve. *— Agencies*

What is Cloud Seeding?

Cloud seeding is a scientific process that disperses substances like silver iodide or sodium chloride into clouds to encourage artificial rainfall, often used to boost precipitation or reduce air pollution.

Satara doc kills self, accuses 2 cops of rape in note on palm

SATARA, 24 OCT

A woman doctor posted at a government hospital in Phaltan, Satara district, was found hanging in a hotel room late Thursday night. Police said the 26-year-old left a suicide note, written on her palm, accusing two police officers of rape and mental harassment.

The doctor, a native of Beed district, alleged that Police Sub-Inspector Gopal Badane repeatedly raped her over five months, while Prashant Bankar subjected her to mental abuse. Police have registered a case and sent the body for a post-mortem.

Officials confirmed the doctor had earlier written to the Deputy Superintendent of Police in June, complaining of harassment by Badane and two other officers, but no action followed.

Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis has ordered the immediate suspension of the accused officers and directed strict action. The Maharashtra Women's Commission has also sought a report from the Satara police and instructed an inquiry into alleged inaction on her earlier complaint.

Opposition leader Vijay Wadettiwar slammed the government, asking why her previous complaint was ignored, while BJP MLC Chitra Wagh assured a fair probe, saying a team had been formed to arrest the absconding accused.

NCP leader Anand Paranjape called the incident 'deeply unfortunate,' urging zero tolerance toward crimes against women. Help is available. Please call Tele Manas at 14416, SAHAI at 080-25497777 for support. *— Agencies*

Infant dies, kin say govt hospital had no doctors

PALGHAR, 24 OCT

A tragic incident occurred in Palghar district of Maharashtra, where the family of 25-year-old Vaishali Ashok Batre claimed she lost her baby during delivery due to a lack of medical staff at a government hospital.

Her husband stated that they arrived at Mokhada Rural Hospital on the morning of 22 October, only to find no doctors available for nearly 12 hours, with only a nurse present. He attributed the newborn's death to the absence of timely medical intervention.

The hospital then transferred the mother and her deceased infant to the Khodala Primary Health Centre.

However, Taluk Medical Officer Bhausaheb Chattar refuted the family's claims of negligence, asserting that a doctor was present but attending to a snakebite emergency.

He indicated that the baby may have suffered from a congenital anomaly, stating, "There was no negligence on the part of the medical team. We also have backup staff at the hospital." *—PTI*

Journalist hacked to death in Prayagraj

PRAYAGRAJ, 24 OCT

A 54-year-old journalist, Laxmi Narayan Singh, alias Pappu, was hacked to death by unidentified assailants near a hotel here on Thursday evening, police said.

Deputy Commissioner of Police Manish Shandilya confirmed that Singh, a journalist by profession, succumbed to his injuries after being attacked with a sharp-edged weapon.

Additional Dy CP Pushkar Verma said Singh was rushed to Swaroop Rani Nehru Hospital in critical condition, where doctors declared him dead on arrival.

Singh was the nephew of former High Court Bar Association president Ashok Singh, police added.

Teams are currently examining CCTV footage from the area to trace the attackers, and efforts are underway to arrest those involved in the henious crime. *— PTI*

Delhi police foil ISIS plot, arrest 2 suspects

NEW DELHI, 24 OCT

Delhi Police on Friday arrested two suspected ISIS operatives who were allegedly plotting a terror attack in the national capital during Diwali, targeting a south Delhi mall and a public park. Officials said the arrests helped avert a 'major terror strike.'

Both suspects, identified as Adnan, one from Delhi's Sadiq Nagar and the other from Bhopal, were arrested by the Special Cell. Additional Commissioner of Police (Special Cell) Pramod Kushwaha said the duo had pledged allegiance to ISIS, and police recovered videos, photos of target locations, and materials intended for making an improvised explosive device (IED). A wristwatch being converted into a timer for the IED was also seized.

Police said the suspects had already conducted reconnaissance of potential targets. The Delhi-based Adnan was arrested on 16 October, followed by his Bhopal associate. The latter had earlier been booked by Uttar Pradesh Police for threatening an Archaeological Survey of India official over the Gyanvapi mosque survey.

Electronic devices and other evidence have been sent for forensic analysis as investigators probe their network and broader links to ISIS. *—PTI*

ED calls K Srikanth over cocaine probe

CHENNAI, 24 OCT

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) has summoned Tamil actors **K Srikanth** and **Krishna Kumar** for questioning in a money laundering case linked to alleged cocaine trafficking. Srikanth, 46, will appear on 27 October, followed by Kumar on 28 October. Their statements will be recorded under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA). The probe stems from a Chennai Police FIR lodged in June. Both actors were previously arrested over the drug allegations but secured conditional bail from the Madras High Court in July. The police also arrested T Prasad, a former AIADMK functionary, accused of supplying cocaine to Srikanth and others. *— PTI*

TN sanitation workers to receive free meals

CHENNAI, 24 OCT

The Tamil Nadu government has sanctioned Rs 186.94 crore to provide free meals to sanitation workers in the Greater Chennai Corporation (GCC) for three years. About 29,455 workers, including those under private contractors, will benefit across 512 locations, a government order said.

The GCC will hire a catering agency to prepare meals in compliance with FSSAI norms, which will be packed and delivered to workers at their workplaces. The scheme, funded through Sixth State Finance Commission grants, accounts for a 5 per cent cost escalation in the second and third years. A project management consultant will oversee quality control. This initiative is the first of six welfare measures introduced by the state, Finance Minister Thangam Thennarasu said. *—PTI*

ICON BEHIND ICONIC ADS

Piyush, 'the adman' who gave Indian advertising its swadeshi voice

5 SEP 1955 - 23 OCT, 2025

MUMBAI, 24 OCT

- Piyush Pandey was admired for keeping his craft deeply Indian yet universally relatable

Born in Jaipur in 1955, Piyush Pandey, India's most celebrated advertising mind, grew up in a lively family of nine that included filmmaker Prasoon Pandey and singer-Bollywood actor Ila Arun.

Educated at St Xavier's School in Jaipur and St Stephen's College, Delhi, where he earned a postgraduate degree in History, Piyush Pandey was a sportsman before he made his mark as adman, playing cricket for Rajasthan's Ranji Trophy team and even working briefly as a tea taster.

He joined Ogilvy India in the early 1980s and remained with the firm for over four decades, eventually becoming its Executive Chairman before stepping into an advisory role in 2023.

Under his creative leadership, Ogilvy produced some of the most memorable campaigns in Indian advertising history — Fevicol's "Yeh Fevicol ka jod hai, tutega nahi," Cadbury Dairy Milk's "Kuchh khaas hai zindagi mein," and the government's Pulse Polio drive "Do Boond Zindagi Ke."

He also co-wrote the patriotic anthem "Mile Sur Mera Tumhara, Toh Sur Bane Hamara," celebrating India's diversity.

Pandey's ads were rooted in Indian emotion and idiom — his Fevicol spots turned everyday humour into lasting metaphors, while Cadbury's cricket-field celebration redefined joy and gender on screen.

Honoured with numerous global awards and one of the prestigious honours in India Padma Shri, Piyush Pandey was admired for keeping his craft deeply Indian yet universally relatable.

His sister Ila Arun called him 'the naughtiest of the nine,' recalling his love for kite-flying and his terrace overlooking the Arabian Sea as his favourite retreat.

An avid sportsman, he won prizes in swimming and javelin throw besides cricket.

Pandey authored books including 'Pandeymonium: Piyush Pandey on Advertising' and 'The Making of a Brand: Asian Paints'.

Pandey is survived by his wife Neeta. The couple had no children and often referred to their dogs as family. *— Salar News*

Piyush Pandey was the creative genius behind India's iconic Fevicol and Cadbury ads. In Cadbury ad, the girl Shimona Rashi's joyful dance became a cultural milestone **PHOTO: SCREENGRAB**

CHHATH POOJA RUSH

Passengers jostle to board a train at the Patna Junction railway station amid heavy rush ahead of the Chhath pooja festival, in Bihar, on Friday. Chhath pooja is a celebration that honours Surya, the Sun God and his sister Chhathi Maiya. People seek the two gods' blessings for well-being, prosperity and children's health. It is a four-day celebration, from 25 October to 28 October
PHOTO: PTI

Bye Russia! India looks at other crude oil sellers

To compensate for reduced direct Russian inflows, Indian refiners are expected to increase procurement from the Middle East, Brazil, Latin America, West Africa, Canada, and the US
PHOTO: PTI

Indian refiners are likely to ramp up crude oil purchases from the Middle East, Latin America and the US to compensate for reduced imports from Russia, following Washington's sanctions on two major Russian producers, sources and analysts said.

The US government, on 22 October, imposed sanctions on Russia's two largest crude oil producers, Rosneft and Lukoil, barring all American entities and individuals from conducting business with them. Non-US firms could also face penalties if found dealing with the sanctioned companies or their subsidiaries. The US Treasury Department said all existing transactions involving Rosneft and Lukoil must be wound down by 21 November.

Russia currently supplies nearly a third of India's crude imports, averaging around 1.7 million barrels per day (mbd) in 2025, of which approximately 1.2mbd came directly from Rosneft and Lukoil. Most of these volumes were bought by private refiners, Reliance Industries Ltd and Nayara Energy, with smaller allocations to state-owned refiners.

Russian crude flows are expected to remain in the 1.6–1.8mbd range until 21 November, but direct volumes from Rosneft and Lukoil are likely to decline thereafter, as Indian refiners seek to avoid any risk of US sanctions, said Sumit Ritolia, Lead Research Analyst (Refining and Modelling) at Kpler.

Reliance, which has a 25-year term contract with Rosneft to buy up to 5,00,000 barrels per day(bpd) of crude, may be the first company to do so, sources said.

Nayara, which is currently dependent solely on Russian oil after supplies from elsewhere dried up due to sanctions by the European Union, has very few options.

To compensate for reduced direct Russian inflows, Indian refiners are expected to increase procurement from the Middle East, Brazil, Latin America, West Africa, Canada, and the United States. "However, higher freight costs could erode arbitrage opportunities and limit large-scale substitution", he added.

Echoing similar views, Prashant Vasisht, Senior Vice President and Co-Group Head, Corporate Ratings, Icra Limited, said pivoting away from Russian oil will lead to a rise in India's import bill.

Russia's exports - about 7.3mbpd, according to the International Energy Agency - account for about 7 per cent of global crude oil and refined fuel consumption. The latest penalties on Rosneft and Lukoil, combined with sanctions imposed earlier this year, mean that firms shipping the majority of Moscow's oil to overseas markets are now blacklisted.

Ritolia said historically risk-averse, state-owned oil refiners have already been purchasing minimal Russian volumes and are likely to further reduce direct transactions with sanctioned entities to mitigate exposure to secondary sanctions related to shipping, insurance, and financial channels.

They will, however, continue indirect purchases through intermediaries where feasible.

"The largest importer of Russian grades, Reliance Industries Ltd (RIL), faces the most immediate challenges. With its term contracts with Rosneft now affected, RIL will need to shift towards third-party spot buying, reworking its supply and financial chains to ensure compliance with OFAC rules while maintaining operational continuity," he pointed out.

The company is expected to front-load liftings (whatever is maximum possible because transit time would be limiting) before enforcement deadlines and later pivot to indirect trade structures, reducing direct imports from sanctioned entities.

Nayara Energy, already under sanctions, is expected to continue its Russian crude imports as usual. It is effectively fully dependent on Russian crude already.

Unless New Delhi steps in with direct pressure, Nayara's operations and sourcing pattern are unlikely to change materially, he added.

Overall, Indian refiners are likely to diversify their import baskets, increasing inflows from Latin America (Brazil, Argentina, Colombia, Guyana), West Africa, and the Middle East. While near-term imports of Russian crude may dip, starting with December loadings, Russian barrels are expected to continue reaching India through intermediaries.

India's refineries are among the most flexible globally and can handle a wide range of crude grades, Ritolia said.

"Unless Indian refineries themselves are sanctioned, or the Government of India formally restricts Russian crude - both unlikely scenarios - Russian oil will continue to flow to India (volume may see a dip in the near to short term), albeit through more complex financial, logistical, and trading structures." *—PTI*

SALAR ساہر

Iraq set for elections amid Middle East tension

Iraq is weeks away from parliamentary elections that will set the country's course during one of the Middle East's most delicate moments in years.

While the ceasefire in Gaza may have tamped down regional tensions, fears remain of another round of conflict between Israel and Iraq's neighbour, Iran. Iraq managed to stay on the sidelines during the brief Israel-Iran war in June.

Meanwhile, Baghdad faces increasing pressure from Washington over the presence of Iran-linked armed groups in Iraq. Iraqi Prime Minister Mohammed Shia al-Sudani came to power in 2022 with the backing of a group of pro-Iran parties but has since sought to balance Iraq's relations with Tehran and Washington.

The 11 November vote will determine whether he gets a second term — rare for Iraqi premiers in the past.

WHO'S MISSING FROM THE ELECTIONS

A total of 7,768 candidates — 2,248 women and 5,520 men — are competing for 329 parliament seats.

The strongest political factions running include Shiite blocs led by former Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki, cleric Ammar al-Hakim, and several linked to armed groups; competing Sunni factions led by former parliament speaker Mohammed al-Halbousi and current speaker Mahmoud al-Mashhadan i; and the two main Kurdish parties, the Kurdistan Democratic Party and the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan. The contest is just as notable for who is absent.

The popular Sadrist Movement, led by influential Shiite cleric Muqtada al-Sadr, is boycotting. Al-Sadr's bloc won the largest number of seats in the 2021 elections but later withdrew after failed negotiations over forming a government, and it continues to stay out of elections.

In the suburb known as Sadr City on Baghdad's outskirts, a banner posted on one street read, "We are all boycotting upon orders from leader al-Sadr. No to America, no to Israel, no to corruption."

The Victory Coalition, a smaller group led by former Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi, also announced a boycott, alleging corruption in the process.

VOTE-BUYING & POLITICAL VIOLENCE

There have been widespread allegations of corruption and vote-buying. Political analyst Bassem al-Qazwini described these elections as "the most exploited since 2003 in terms of political money and state resources."

A campaign official, who spoke on condition of anonymity because he was talking about alleged illegal conduct, asserted that almost all candidates, including major blocs, are distributing money and buying voter cards, with the price of a card going as high as 300,000 Iraqi dinars (around $200).

The Independent High Electoral Commission asserted its commitment to conducting a fair and transparent process, saying in a statement to The Associated Press that "strict measures have been taken to monitor campaign spending and curb vote-buying."

It added that any candidate found guilty of violating laws or buying votes will be "immediately disqualified". Campaigning has been marred by political violence.

On 15 October, Baghdad Provincial Council member Safaa al-Mashhadani, a Sunni candidate in the al-Tarmiya district north of the capital, was killed by a car bomb. Two people were arrested on suspicion of the killing, the First Karkh Investigative Court said Thursday.

THE ROLE OF MILITIAS

Political parties linked to Iran-backed militias are leveraging their significant military and financial influence.

They include the Kataib Hezbollah militia, with its Harakat Huqouq (Rights Movement) bloc, and the Sadiqoun Bloc led by the leader of the Asaib Ahl al-Haq militia, Qais al-Khazali.

The Popular Mobilization Forces, a coalition of militias that formed to fight the Islamic State group, was formally placed under the control of the Iraqi military in 2016 but in practice still operates with significant autonomy.

Al-Sudani told journalists recently that armed factions that have transformed into political entities have the constitutional right to participate in elections.

AL-SUDANI SEEKS ANOTHER TERM

Al-Sudani has positioned himself as a pragmatist focused on improving public services. Polling shows that Iraqis are relatively positive about the country's situation.

Al-Mustakella Research Group, affiliated with Gallup International Association, found that over the past two years, for the first time since 2004, more than half of Iraqis polled believed the country is heading in the right direction. In the latest poll, in early 2025, 55 per cent of Iraqis surveyed said they had confidence in the central government.

However, only one Iraqi prime minister, Maliki, has served more than one term since 2003. Ihsan al-Shammari, professor of strategic and international studies at Baghdad University, said that the premiership "does not depend solely on election results but on political bloc agreements and regional and international understandings" to form a government.

Some Iraqis said they don't have high hopes for the country, no matter what the election outcome. *—PTI*

Iraqi Prime Minister Mohammed Shia al-Sudani speaks at his political block campaign rally before the parliamentary elections in Mosul, Iraq, on 18 October
PHOTO: PTI

LETTERS write to us at salarenglishdigital@gmail.com

From prison to stalls: Bengal inmates sell food, handicrafts outside jail

PHOTO: AI

Every afternoon, the aroma of potato fritters and cutlets wafts through the air outside the tall walls of Alipore Women's Correctional Home in Kolkata. Passersby stop to buy snacks, unaware that the women frying and packing the food are inmates still serving sentences.

For these women inmates, the small stall just inside the jail gate is more than a workplace; it's a bridge between confinement and community.

It offers them a chance to rediscover themselves, interact with the outside world, and regain dignity often lost in isolation.

They are part of 'Abhinno' (Integrated), an innovative initiative launched in July by the West Bengal Correctional Services Department to help inmates earn livelihoods and rebuild confidence while in prison. Under the programme, prisoners prepare and sell food, handicrafts, and other goods prepared by them directly to the public from stalls located outside correctional home entrances, a move officials describe as "rehabilitation with dignity".

West Bengal Correctional Services Minister Chandranath Sinha said "Abhinno" is setting a new benchmark in prison reform.

What began as a modest experiment at Alipore Women's Correctional Home is soon turning into a model across Bengal's prisons.

Around 25 inmates are part of the initiative at Alipore, with eight running the stall daily - handling cooking, serving, selling handicrafts and accounts under supervision.

Though surrounded by high walls, the scene buzzes with life and laughter as the women trade recipes, count earnings, and call out to customers with quiet pride.

The idea, officials say, was born from a simple conversation. "We were discussing how inmates' work could sustain them after release," said Debashis Chakraborty, DIG (Prisons), Presidency Range. "That led to the idea of creating a structured platform for their skills."

The proposal sent to Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee received an instant nod. "She not only approved it," Chakraborty said, "but also named it herself-Abhinno."

Initially, four correctional homes-Alipore Women's, Presidency, Dum Dum, and Suri-were chosen, he said.

Alipore became the starting point as it already had ready-to-use stalls near its gate. The initiative has since expanded to the other three prisons, where inmates have been shortlisted to manage stalls.

Encouraged by its success, officials plan to introduce 'Abhinno' stalls in all major jails, creating a sustainable rehabilitation model.

For the inmates, the day begins before dawn. They knead dough, chop vegetables, and prepare trays of 'ghugni', 'cutlets', and 'samosas'. Some decorate cakes while others pack rolls and pastries.

By late afternoon, customers from nearby offices and educational institutions line up for lunch. Behind the smiles and services, women are learning teamwork, responsibility, and the basics of running a business. "Inside prison, we follow strict schedules, but when we work here, we feel free, not because we can go outside, but because people from outside come to us," said one inmate.

Earnings from the stall go into the West Bengal Prisoners' Welfare Fund, while the inmates receive wages saved and handed over upon release, the official said.

Allowing inmates to interact with the public required faith, said Chakraborty. "We have trusted human beings, and that trust has not been misplaced." Security is ensured through CCTV and guards, but the real safeguard, officials say, is the sense of purpose the project gives.

According to ADG (Prisons) LN Meena, the initiative has made a visible difference.

Besides food, the stalls also showcase a range of products made in Bengal's jails-textiles, jute crafts, candles, detergents, and clothes. Weaving units produce towels and bedsheets, while carpentry workshops make furniture for prison use.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, inmates produced face masks and PPE kits. The programme is being implemented with Junglemahal Udyog, an NGO that trains inmates in skills & livelihood generation.

"The project is new, but the response is overwhelming. It's heartening to see them gain confidence through their own work," said NGO secretary Priyabrata Bera.

What began as a correctional experiment is now transforming public attitudes. Locals who once avoided prison gates now stop for tea and snacks. "The food is great and the people are polite", said a college student at the Alipore stall.

Officials say such interactions reshape both inmates' self-image and society's perception of them. "Correction is not just about confinement," said a senior officer.

Buoyed by public response, the department plans to expand the project to all prisons, register it as a cooperative brand, and explore tie-ups with cafes, canteens, and government outlets for wider outreach. *—PTI*

PHOTO: X

US B-1 bombers patrol near Venezuela

WASHINGTON, 24 OCT

The US military deployed two supersonic B 1 Lancer bombers to fly off Venezuela's coast on a training sortie, following a recent B 52 deployment, officials say. The move is part of an expanded US force in the Caribbean that has carried out lethal strikes on suspected drug vessels, prompting speculation President Donald Trump may be intensifying pressure on Nicolás Maduro. The White House denied the bomber flight signalled escalation, with Trump blaming Venezuelan actions over drugs. Pentagon assets in the region include warships, maritime patrol aircraft, drones and an F 35 squadron. Regional tensions remain elevated, analysts warn. *—PTI*

UK PM gives £10M to protect Muslims from hate crimes

LONDON, 24 OCT

UK Prime Minister Keir Starmer has pledged £10 million to strengthen security at mosques across the country, following a recent violent attack that has heightened fears of anti-Muslim hate crimes. In a video message shared on X, Starmer condemned rising religious intolerance and said such acts "will not be tolerated." He expressed sympathy for the victims and their families, saying the incident had deeply affected communities nationwide. The Prime Minister acknowledged that it was "sad" to require protection at places of worship but insisted the government had a duty to act. The funding aims to reinforce safety measures and demonstrate solidarity with Muslims. *—Agencies*

PHOTO: X

US crash: Indian trucker's kin say he wasn't intoxicated

WASHINGTON, 24 OCT

The family of a 21-year-old Indian-origin truck driver, who has been accused of causing a semi-truck crash that left three people dead in the US, on Friday rubbished claims that he was intoxicated while driving, saying he was an 'Amritdhari Sikh' (baptised Sikh). Jashanpreet Singh allegedly rammed his truck into slow-moving traffic in Southern California on Tuesday . At least three people were killed and several others were injured in the crash Quoting police, the report said Singh never hit the brakes of his truck before slamming into the traffic. It also said that toxicology tests confirmed impairment. He has been arrested on suspicion of gross vehicular manslaughter while intoxicated.— *PTI*

Don ends trade talks with Canada over ad criticising tariffs

The ad produced by the govt uses an edited clip of ex-prez Reagan speaking against tariffs

WASHINGTON, 24 OCT

Canada trade tensions deepened on Thursday after President Donald Trump announced an end to "all trade negotiations" with Canada, accusing Ottawa of "egregious behaviour" over a television advert opposing US tariffs.

Trump claimed on his social media site that the ad, produced by Ontario's government, "fraudulently" used an edited clip of Ronald Reagan speaking against tariffs. He said the ad aimed to "interfere with the decision of the US Supreme Court", declaring, "Based on their egregious behaviour, all trade negotiations with Canada are hereby terminated."

The Ronald Reagan Presidential Foundation and Institute confirmed the advert "misrepresents" Reagan's 1987 address on free trade and said it was "reviewing legal options".

Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney, who earlier this month met Trump to ease tensions, did not immediately comment. He is set to leave for an Asia summit on Friday.

The Ontario government paid about $75 million Canadian (US$54 million) for the ads to air across multiple American television stations using audio and video of former president Reagan speaking about tariffs in 1987.

Canada PM Mark Carney met with US President Donald Trump earlier this month to try to ease trade tensions *PHOTO: SCREENGRAB*

The dispute coincided with Ottawa announcing tighter rules on tariff relief for automakers after Stellantis and General Motors ended some production in Canada. A government official said both firms would lose part of their exemption from counter-tariff duties introduced in retaliation to US levies.

Stellantis recently shifted its Jeep Compass production from Ontario to Illinois, while GM ended production of its BrightDrop electric vans. Ottawa will reduce GM's tariff-free quota by 24% and Stellantis's by 50 per cent.

Autos are Canada's second-largest export, employing about 1,25,000 people directly and nearly half a million in related industries. Trump has urged US automakers to move production back home, worsening fears for Ontario's auto sector. More than three-quarters of Canadian exports go to the US, with around C$3.6 billion (US$2.7 billion) in goods and services crossing the border daily. The latest moves mark a sharp setback as both sides prepare for a review of the US–Mexico–Canada Agreement. *—PTI*

NVIDIA, SALESFORCE CEOS SAVE SAN FRANCISCO FROM TROOPS

SAN FRANCISCO, 24 OCT

President Donald Trump said he has paused plans to deploy federal forces to San Francisco after appeals from tech executives and Mayor Daniel Lurie. Trump cited calls from Nvidia CEO Jensen Huang and Salesforce's Marc Benioff, who urged restraint, saying the city was tackling crime. He also praised Lurie's efforts to revive San Francisco, noting crime has fallen 26 per cent. Lurie warned that military or immigration enforcement would hinder recovery. The decision drew praise from Governor Gavin Newsom and Nancy Pelosi, though some local officials remain sceptical that Trump will hold back. *—PTI*

WHITE HOUSE GETS BALLROOM MAKEOVER

Satellite images show a demolished East Wing of the White House, where Donald Trump's $300 million ballroom will come up. This wing once housed the First Lady's office. Trump said the project will be funded entirely by private donors and himself. Donors listed include Amazon, Apple, Google, Meta, Palantir and defence giant Lockheed Martin *PHOTO: SCREENGRAB*

DON TO FIGHT H1B FEE LAWSUITS

WASHINGTON, 24 OCT

The US government said it will contest multiple lawsuits challenging the new USD 1,00,000 fee on

H1B visa petitions, defending the move as vital to protecting American workers and curbing fraud.

White House Press Secretary Karoline Leavitt said on Thursday that the administration would "fight these lawsuits in court," asserting that the H1B system had "for far too long been spammed with fraud" and driven down US wages.

The US Chamber of Commerce, along with unions, employers and religious groups,

has filed cases in federal courts in California and Columbia, calling the fee "misguided" and "unlawful." The Chamber's suit argues the decision exceeds the president's authority and threatens US innovation.

President Donald Trump signed the proclamation "Restriction on Entry of Certain Nonimmigrant Workers" on 19 September, introducing the hefty new fee.

The US Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) later clarified that the charge would not apply to visa extensions or status changes. *—PTI*

Musk's takes a jibe at 'sex warfare' in Silicon Valley

SAN FRANCISCO, 24 OCT

Elon Musk has quipped about reports alleging Chinese and Russian operatives are using romantic deception to infiltrate Silicon Valley's tech industry. Sharing a Times (UK) article titled "Female spies are waging 'sex warfare' to steal Silicon Valley secrets," Musk wrote, "If she's a 10, you're an asset." The report claimed that spies target employees in firms like Apple and Google to access classified data, with US security experts warning of increasing intelligence operations aimed at America's innovation sector. *—Agencies*

Trump to meet Xi on 30 Oct during ASEAN summit

US President Donald Trump will begin a three-nation tour of Asia late on Friday, focusing on trade, regional security, and relations with China, the White House confirmed. A high-stakes meeting with Chinese President Xi Jinping on 30 October will be the tour's focal point, with both leaders expected to address trade frictions, rare earth exports, and cooperation on fentanyl control. Officials say the trip aims to strengthen US engagement across Asia. The visit starts in Kuala Lumpur, where Trump will attend the ASEAN Summit on 26–27 October and hold bilateral talks with Malaysian Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim. He will also join a US–ASEAN working dinner and participate in a signing ceremony with regional leaders. *—ANI*

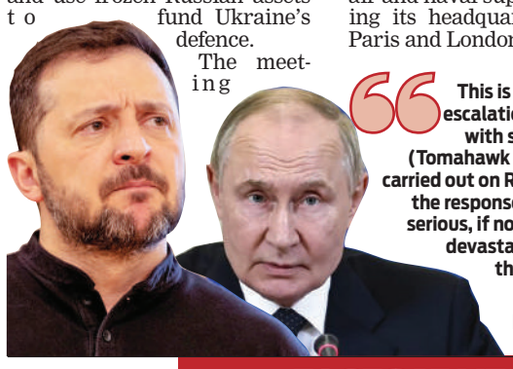
Zelenskyy meets Starmer in London

LONDON, 24 OCT

Prime Minister Sir Keir Starmer met Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky at Downing Street on Friday ahead of a high-level meeting aimed at strengthening Ukraine's defences and increasing pressure on Moscow.

Starmer will urge allies to step up supplies of long-range weapons to help Kyiv strike back at Russia and protect its power grid ahead of winter. The talks will also explore measures to cripple the econ-omy supporting President Vladimir Putin's war effort, including efforts to remove Russian oil and gas from global markets and use frozen Russian assets to fund Ukraine's defence.

The meeting — hosted by Britain and attended by around two dozen leaders — will focus on bol-stering Ukraine's air defences and deterring future Russian attacks. NATO Secretary-General Mark Rutte, Danish Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen and Dutch Prime Minister Dick Schoof will attend in person, with about 20 others joining virtually in the so-called Coalition of the Willing. Starmer said the talks aim to "step up pressure" on Putin, adding, "Time and again we offer him the chance to stop the killing, but he rejects any proposal for peace." Leaders may also discuss a potential "reassurance force" to provide air and naval support, alternating its headquarters between Paris and London. *—PTI*



This is an attempt at escalation, but if strikes with such weapons (Tomahawk missiles) are carried out on Russian territory, the response will be very serious, if not downright devastating. Let them think about that

-Vladimir Putin, Russian President

IN MAIDEN SPEECH

Japan PM vows 2% of GDP for defence

TOKYO, 24 OCT

Japanese Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi, in her inaugural policy address on Friday, committed to expediting the nation's military buildup and elevating defence spending to 2 per cent of GDP by March, ahead of the previously set 2027 target. This strategic shift, she stated, is necessitated by escalating tensions with China, North Korea, and Russia.

"The free, open and stable international order that we were accustomed to is violently shaken in the face of historic change of power balance and intensifying geopolitical competitions," Takaichi declared. "In the region around Japan, military activities and other actions from our neighbours are causing grave concerns."

The Prime Minister also plans to revise Japan's security strategy by the end of 2026, a departure from the previous practice of updating it approximately every ten years. She attributed the urgency to shifts in the global security landscape, including Russia's invasion of Ukraine and ongoing conflicts in the Middle East.

In the context of her upcoming summit with US President Donald Trump from 27-29 October, Takaichi indicated that strengthening the Japan-US alliance would be a key agenda item. *—PTI*

EU accuses Meta, Tiktok of breaching transparency

BRUSSELS, 24 OCT

The European Union on Friday accused Meta and TikTok of violating transparency rules under the bloc's Digital Services Act (DSA), following investigations that could lead to fines worth billions of dollars.

The EU's inquiry found both companies failed to meet obligations requiring open data access for researchers, user-friendly reporting tools for illegal content, and a ban on targeted ads for children. Meta's Facebook and Instagram were also accused of deploying "dark patterns" — deceptive interface designs that make it difficult for users to flag harmful material or challenge moderation decisions.

Henna Virkunnen, the EU's executive vice president for tech sovereignty, said the bloc was ensuring accountability from online platforms.

"Our democracies depend on trust. Platforms must empower users, respect their rights, and open their systems to scrutiny," she said.

The European Commission noted that researcher access is vital for public scrutiny of social media's impact on mental and physical health.Meta said it disagreed with the findings but had already introduced changes to comply with the law. TikTok said it would review the report, arguing that DSA transparency rules conflict with the EU's privacy regulation, GDPR. Both companies have the right to respond before potential fines of up to 6 per cent of annual profits are imposed. *—PTI*

FACES 15 YEARS IN JAIL

Indian arrested for moonlighting in US, 'earned' $50K from jobs

WASHINGTON, 24 OCT

Authorities have charged Mehul Goswami, a 39-year-old Indian-American government employee from Latham, New York, with grand larceny for allegedly holding a second, full-time job while being paid by the state. The arrest came after an investigation by the Saratoga County Sheriff's Office and the New York State Inspector General's Office, which examined Goswami's work activities and payroll records.

Goswami, who works remotely for the Office of Information Technology Services (ITS), is accused of simultaneously holding another position in the town of Malta during hours he was officially on state duty. Authorities claim this dual employment led to the misappropriation of more than USD 50,000, prompting a charge of grand larceny in the second degree, a Class C felony carrying a maximum prison sentence of 15 years and potential fines.

State Inspector General Lucy Lang criticised the alleged misconduct, stating that public employees are entrusted with integrity and accountability, and that Goswami's actions constituted a serious breach of trust and an abuse of taxpayer resources.

- Goswami, who worked for Office of Information Technology Services, is accused of simultaneously holding another position in Malta.

Goswami was arraigned at Malta Town Court and released on his own recognisance, as the offence does not qualify for bail under current New York law. Sheriff Michael H Zurlo said authorities anticipate a successful resolution in court. *—PTI*

Afghan to restrict river flow to Pak

NANGARHAR, 24 OCT

The Taliban government in Afghanistan has ordered the rapid construction of dams on the Kunar River, a critical water source for Pakistan, as part of a broader effort to assert control over the country's water resources. Supreme Leader Mawlawi Hibatullah Akhundzada instructed the Ministry of Water and Energy to begin construction immediately, with domestic firms engaged to carry out the work, Afghan officials confirmed.

The Kunar River, known in Pakistan as the Chitral River, originates from the Chiantar glacier near the Gilgit-Baltistan–Chitral border, flows through Afghanistan's Nangarhar province where it merges with the Kabul River, and eventually enters Pakistan. Its flow is fed by snow and glacier melt from the Hindu Kush mountains, making it a vital water source for agriculture and communities downstream.

Afghanistan's decision mirrors India's recent move to suspend the Indus Waters Treaty *PHOTO: PTI*

The decision comes after recent cross-border clashes between Afghanistan and Pakistan, which ended with a ceasefire, and follows India's suspension of the Indus Waters Treaty earlier this year. Observers note that the move underscores the increasing use of water as a strategic tool in regional politics.

Relations between Kabul and Islamabad remain tense, with Pakistan accusing the Taliban of sheltering Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan militants. Analysts warn that the new dam project could heighten tensions and complicate regional water-sharing agreements in South Asia. *—Agencies*

CANADA POST ISSUES DEEPAVALI STAMP

Canada Post has released a new Deepavali-themed stamp featuring a traditional Rangoli pattern designed by Indian-origin artist Ritu Kanal. The stamp, bearing the word "Diwali" in Hindi and English, continues Canada Post's annual festive series launched in 2017 *PHOTO: PTI*

PHOTO: FREEPIK

Gold tanks to Rs 1.25L/10g amid weak global trends

NEW DELHI, 24 OCT

Gold prices tanked to Rs 1,25,600 per 10g in the national capital on Friday amid weak trends in the international markets, according to the All India Sarafa Association. The precious metal of 99.9 per cent purity had closed at Rs 1,32,400 per 10g on 18 October. Gold of 99.5 per cent purity slumped to Rs 1,25,000 per 10g (inclusive of all taxes). It had settled at Rs 1,31,800 per 10g on Saturday. In the local bullion market, silver prices also tumbled to Rs 1,52,600 per kilogram (inclusive of all taxes) on Friday. It had ended at Rs 1,70,000 per kg in the previous market session. In the international markets, spot gold fell by USD 38.47, or 0.93 per cent, to USD 4,087.55 per ounce on Friday after rising 0.67 per cent in the previous session. *—PTI*

Rupee rises by 10P, settles at 87.78 against USD

MUMBAI, 24 OCT

The rupee appreciated 10 paise to close at 87.78 (provisional) against the US dollar on Friday, supported by optimism around India-US trade talks and a decline in global crude oil prices. However, FII outflows, a stronger dollar against foreign currencies, and a weak sentiment in the domestic equity markets restricted sharp gains in the local unit, according to forex traders. At the interbank foreign exchange, the rupee opened at 87.78 against the US dollar and traded in the range of 87.63-87.85 before settling at 87.78 (provisional), up 10 paise from its previous close. Meanwhile, the dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, was trading 0.10 per cent higher at 99.03. *—PTI*

DMart founder invests ₹90 cr in Lenskart

NEW DELHI, 24 OCT

Billionaire Radhakishan Damani, founder of Avenue Supermarts (DMart), has invested about Rs 90 crore in eyewear retailer Lenskart Solutions ahead of its initial public offering (IPO), sources said. The investment precedes Lenskart's maiden IPO, expected to open next week. The company plans to raise Rs 2,150 crore through fresh equity, while promoters and investors will offload 13.22 crore shares. Promoters include Peyush and Neha Bansal, Amit Chaudhary and Sumeet Kapahi, with investors such as SVF II Lightbulb, Schroders Capital, PI Opportunities Fund, Macritchie Investments, Kedaara Capital and Alpha Wave Ventures. Founded in 2008, Lenskart sells prescription eyeglasses, sunglasses and contact lenses online and in physical stores. *—PTI*

Samsung wins big orders from Tesla, Apple & Nintendo

SEOUL, 24 OCT

Samsung Electronics' foundry division is seeing a strong revival after securing major chipmaking orders from Tesla, Apple, and Nintendo, a report by The Korea Herald said. In addition to its $16.5 billion deal to produce Tesla's AI6 chip from 2027 to 2033, Samsung will manufacture Tesla's AI5 chip in Texas from 2026, sharing production with TSMC's Arizona facility. The chips will power Tesla's cars, robots, and data centres. Samsung is also co-developing next-generation image sensors with Apple and producing Nvidia-designed processors for Nintendo's Switch 2 console. Analysts say diversifying supply chains away from TSMC has strengthened Samsung's prospects, with its foundry losses narrowing. *—ANI*

India's mfg purchasing index rises to 2-month high

India's mfg sector continues to expand at a solid pace: Report

NEW DELHI, 24 OCT

India's manufacturing activity showed renewed strength in October, with the HSBC Flash India Manufacturing Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI) rising to a two-month high of 58.4, up from 57.7 in September, a report showed on Friday.

The data compiled by S&P Global indicates that the country's manufacturing sector continues to expand at a solid pace, supported by strong domestic demand and easing cost pressures. The rise in the PMI reflects an improvement in business conditions, driven by higher new orders, increased production, and steady employment levels.

According to HSBC's Chief India Economist Pranjul Bhandari, the recent GST rate cuts have helped boost domestic demand while keeping input costs under control.

She added that both new orders and output remain above the average seen between January and July.

The rise in the manufacturing PMI reflects an improvement in business conditions *PHOTO: ANI*

"The HSBC Flash Manufacturing PMI picked up slightly, likely on the back of GST rate cuts, which are supporting domestic demand and curbing cost pressures," Bhandari said.

However, export-related challenges persist due to the impact of US tariffs, which continue to weigh on new export orders and future business optimism.

"Both new orders and output are above the average January–July levels. However, the drag from US tariffs continues to affect new export orders and future optimism, which remain below the January–July levels," she mentioned.

Meanwhile, the HSBC Flash India Composite Output Index -- which measures the combined performance of the manufacturing and services sectors -- fell to 59.9 in October from 61.0 in September.

The seasonally adjusted index still remained well above the neutral 50-mark -- indicating continued economic expansion, albeit at a slower pace. Experts said that the strong rebound in manufacturing suggests continued resilience in domestic demand and industrial activity heading into the final quarter of the year. *—Agencies*

FOR RS 6,196 CRORE

Federal Bank sells 9.99% stake to Blackstone

NEW DELHI, 24 OCT

PHOTO: ANI

Federal Bank announced on Friday that its board has authorised a substantial fundraising initiative through the issuance of preferential warrants valued at over Rs 6,196 crore to Blackstone's Asia II Topco XIII Pte Ltd.

In a regulatory filing, the bank disclosed that the board has also approved a special right for the investor to nominate one non-executive director to its board, contingent upon the investor maintaining at least a 5 per cent stake in the bank's paid-up share capital.

Federal Bank plans to issue approximately 27.29 crore preferential warrants at a price of Rs 227 each, amounting to Rs 6,196 crore via private placement.

The warrants will have a tenure of 18 months from the date of allotment. Upon conversion of the warrants into equity shares, Asia II Topco XIII Pte Ltd will hold a 9.99 per cent equity stake in Federal Bank.

To approve the preferential warrant issuance and the special right for the investor to appoint a director, Federal Bank has called for an extraordinary general meeting (EGM) on 19 November, which will be conducted via video conferencing.

Following the announcement, shares of Federal Bank on the BSE settled at Rs 227.35 during afternoon trade. *—PTI*

Oil prices steady after US sanctions on Russian crude

NEW DELHI, 24 OCT

International crude oil prices traded largely steady on Friday, consolidating after a sharp surge the previous day triggered by fresh US sanctions on major Russian oil producers.

At the time of reporting, Brent crude futures were up 0.3 per cent at $66.19 per barrel, while WTI futures stood at $62.00, reflecting mild profit-booking after Thursday's more than 5 per cent rise.

Analysts said the move followed reports that China's state-owned oil companies halted seaborne purchases of Russian crude in response to sanctions on Rosneft and Lukoil, firms that together account for nearly half of Russia's oil exports.

The measures freeze US-based assets and bar American entities from business dealings with the companies, aiming to restrict Russia's ability to fund its war operations.

Russian President Vladimir Putin dismissed the sanctions as an "unfriendly move," asserting they would have little impact on the Russian economy.

The combined effects of sanctions, EU restrictions, and Ukrainian strikes on Russian energy infrastructure have, however, intensified global supply concerns.

Experts noted that Indian refiners have reduced imports of Russian crude amid the volatility, while expectations of renewed US-China trade dialogue and stable demand prospects could lend support to prices. *—ANI*

Sensex, Nifty decline after 6-day win rally

MUMBAI, 24 OCT

Benchmark indices Sensex and Nifty declined on Friday amid profit-taking in FMCG and banking shares following a six-day rally and fresh foreign fund outflows.

Snapping its six-day winning streak, the 30-share BSE Sensex dropped by 344.52 points or 0.41 per cent to settle at 84,211.88. During the day, it fell by 599.25 points or 0.70 per cent to 83,957.15.

A total of 2,323 stocks declined while 1,853 advanced and 166 remained unchanged on the BSE.

The 50-share NSE Nifty declined by 96.25 points or 0.37 per cent to 25,795.15 as 34 of its constituents closed lower and 16 with gains.

In a holiday-shortened week, the BSE benchmark climbed 259.69 points or 0.30 per cent, and the Nifty went up by 85.3 points or 0.33 per cent.

Profit-taking emerged after a six-day rally, during which key indices soared by around 3 per cent on strong festive

PHOTO: PTI

demand and foreign fund inflows. Both Sensex and Nifty hit their 52-week highs on Thursday.

Sentiment was further dampened after Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal on Friday said India does not do trade agreements in a hurry or with a "gun to our head".

Among Sensex firms, Hindustan Unilever dropped the most by 3.20 per cent. UltraTech Cement, Kotak Mahindra Bank, Adani Ports, Titan, HDFC Bank and Axis Bank were also among the laggards.

However, Bharti Airtel, ICICI Bank, Bharat Electronics and Sun Pharma were among the gainers. *—PTI*

Eternal CEO invests $25M to expand longevity initiative

NEW DELHI, 24 OCT

Eternal CEO **Deepinder Goyal** has announced a personal investment of USD 25 million to expand his health and longevity initiative, Continue Research.

Launched two years ago, the venture investigates the science of human ageing and aims to promote long-term societal thinking by extending the period of healthy human function.

In a post on X, Goyal explained that the expanded fund will support global researchers focusing on fundamental questions about human biology and longevity.

He emphasised that the project seeks to encourage innovative approaches and back scientists willing to explore unconventional ideas.

Although Eternal, Goyal's holding company, owns businesses such as Zomato and Blinkit, Continue Research operates independently as a philanthropic and scientific enterprise. It is designed to advance knowledge in human longevity and improve quality of life worldwide.

Goyal's announcement highlights growing interest in long-term health research and reflects his commitment to funding scientific initiatives that challenge traditional approaches and prioritise sustainable human well-being. *—PTI*

PHOTO: ANI

RS 695–730 PRICE BAND

Orkla India targets ₹10,000 cr in upcoming IPO

NEW DELHI, 24 OCT

Orkla India, owner of spices and condiments brands MTR and Eastern, has set a price band of Rs 695-730 per share for its Rs 1,667Cr Initial Public Offering (IPO), aiming for a valuation of roughly Rs 10,000Cr at the upper end.

The IPO, a complete Offer for Sale (OFS) of 2.28 crore shares by promoters and existing shareholders, opens for public subscription on 29 October and closes on 31 October. Anchor investors can bid on 28 October. There is no fresh issue, so proceeds will go entirely to the selling shareholders: Orkla Asia Pacific Pte, Navas Meeran, and Feroz Meeran. Promoters currently hold 90 per cent of the company, with the Meerans owning 5 per cent each.

Orkla India, formerly MTR Foods, manufactures spices, ready-to-eat meals, sweets, and breakfast mixes under various brands. Half of the IPO is reserved for institutional buyers, 35 per cent for retail investors, and 15 per cent for non-institutional investors. The company is expected to list on 6 November, with ICICI Securities, Citi, JP Morgan, and Kotak Mahindra Capital as lead managers. *—PTI*

- Orkla India manufactures spices, ready-to-eat meals, sweets, and breakfast mixes under various brands.

Tata Motors renamed to Tata Motors Passenger Vehicles

MUMBAI, 24 OCT

Tata Motors has been officially renamed to Tata Motors Passenger Vehicles (TMPV), with its new scrip ID 'TMPV' now reflecting on stock exchanges, following the anticipated demerger of its commercial vehicle division. The shares of the demerged entity are expected to be listed on the BSE and NSE later this month.

Investors holding Tata Motors shares as of this date will receive one share of the new commercial vehicle entity, TML Commercial Vehicles Ltd (TMLCV), for each share they own.

Following the name change, TMPV shares opened at Rs 400 and were trading at Rs 406.25, reflecting a nearly 2 per cent increase. *—Agencies*

FM urges courteous yet firm GST enforcement

GHAZIABAD, 24 OCT

Finance Minister **Nirmala Sitharaman** on Friday urged GST officers to facilitate honest taxpayers while taking strict action against dishonest ones. Speaking at the CGST building inauguration in Ghaziabad, she emphasised empathy, courtesy, and swift grievance redressal under the next-generation GST. She called for timely conclusion of disciplinary proceedings against officers, saying it would reinforce accountability and protect morale. She advised officers to use technology for faster registrations, reduce compliance burden, and identify root causes of recurring issues. From 1 November, 2025, the Simplified GST Registration Scheme will provide automatic registration within three working days for eligible applicants, benefiting nearly 96 per cent of new taxpayers. She stressed that politeness should not dilute enforcement. *—PTI*

IN MAJOR CITIES

Starlink gears up for India launch with 9 stations

CALIFORNIA, 24 OCT

SpaceX owner Elon Musk is preparing for his satellite communication (satcom) firm, Starlink's launch in India, with nine gateway earth stations to be set up in major cities, a report by The Economic Times said.

According to ET, some of the gateways will be in Mumbai, Noida, Chandigarh, Hyderabad, Kolkata, and Lucknow, and this move comes amid the firm's infrastructure development.

Starlink has bid for a capacity of 600 gigabit per second over India via the firm's Gen 1 constellation, sources familiar with the matter said.

Before starting commercial operations, the company must prove its security-related concerns through provisional spectrum terms assigned trials by the Department of Telecommunications (DoT), it added. The satcom is currently permitted to bring in 100 user terminals and perform satellite service demonstrations in a limited number, sources said.

PHOTO: ANI

Starlink was preparing to hire foreign technical experts, but the decision was blocked by the Indian government, citing that foreigners were not allowed to handle the operations until the Ministry of Home Affairs grants the security clearance, the report said.

It added that this decision was made in concern regarding the national security and possible abuse of sensitive border areas.

According to the provisional spectrum terms, the data generated will be reserved by India, and the firm must report to DoT & security agencies every 2 weeks. *—Agencies*

Tesla recalls 63K Cybertrucks over bright front light

NEW YORK, 24 OCT

Tesla is recalling more than 63,000 Cybertrucks in the US due to front lights being excessively bright, which may distract other drivers and heighten the risk of collisions. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) confirmed that the recall affects specific Cybertruck models produced between 2024 and 2026, made from 13 November, 2023, to 11 October, 2025, with operating software versions prior to 2025.38.3. To rectify the issue, Tesla, owner Elon Musk, is providing a free software update. This recall follows a recent probe launched by federal regulators into Tesla's self-driving feature after incidents where vehicles ran red lights or drove against traffic were reported. *—PTI*

Kerala's healthcare gets World Bank's nod for $280M loan

NEW DELHI, 24 OCT

The World Bank has approved a $280 million (around Rs 2,300 cr) loan to enhance Kerala's health system and improve the life expectancy and quality of life of nearly 11 million elderly and vulnerable people.

Under the Kerala Health System Improvement Programme, the initiative will support and treat over 90 per cent of patients registered for hypertension and diabetes through individual electronic tracking.

It will also establish a home-based care model for bedridden and elderly citizens to ensure comprehensive healthcare.

The programme will expand Kerala's digital health services by integrating eHealth systems, strengthening data platforms, and improving cyber security. It will also introduce climate-resilient health infrastructure, with facilities in Wayanad, Kozhikode, Kasaragod, Palakkad, and Alappuzha adopting energy-efficient and heat and flood-resistant solutions.

According to Paul Procee, the World Bank's Acting Country Director for India, the programme aims to achieve a 40 per cent increase in controlled hypertension cases and a 60 per cent rise in cervical and breast cancer screenings.

The loan, carries a 25-year maturity and a five-year grace period. *—PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

Mandal wins bronze in boys' 5,000m walk

RIFFA, 24 OCT

India's Palash Mandal won a bronze medal in the boys' 5000m walk at the Asian Youth Games here on Friday. Mandal clocked 24:48.92s to secure the third position in the final behind the Chinese duo of Haoze Zhang (21:43.82s) and silver medallist Yujie Lu (22:28.64s). The meet record is in the name of Nitin Gupta of India, who clocked 19:24.48s in 2025 in Patna. The dominant show on the mat lifted India's tally to two gold, three silver, and seven bronze medals (2-3-7) at the continental event that will conclude on 27 October.China continued to lead the ta ble with eight gold, 11 silver, and two bronze (8-11-2), followed by Thailand (6-2-2), Uzbekistan (6-2-2), and Iran (3-4-6).—*PTI*

Hansika puts up a strong show, makes 53kg SF

NOVI SAD, 24 OCT

Extending Indian women's decent run at the U23 World Wrestling Championships, Hansika Lamba reached the 53kg semifinal while Neha Sharma used her repechage chance to enter the bronze medal race in the 57kg weight class, here on Friday.Priya Malik had won India's second medal of the tournament on Thursday night by bagging a bronze with a commanding 8-1 win over Mexican wrestler Edna Jimenez Villalba.Nishu (55kg), Pulkit (65kg), and Srishti (68kg) will also fight for bronze medals later in the day.Hansika lost only two points in her three bouts. She began with an 11-0 win over Victoryia Volk and followed that up with an 8-2 victory over Kazakhstan's Zeinep Bayanova.In the quarterfinal.—*PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

Bagnis tests positive for banned substance

LONDON, 24 OCT

Argentine tennis player Facundo Bagnis chose to begin a voluntary provisional suspension in an anti-doping case after testing positive for a substance in the category of diuretics and masking agents, the International Tennis Integrity Agency announced Thursday. The 35-year-old Bagnis' test came while he was competing in qualifying at the US Open in August. His loss in the first round was his sixth defeat in a row in Grand Slam qualifying matches. He reached a career-high No. 55 in the ATP rankings in 2016.—*PTI*

Next stop, Athens: Coach Rafa Benitez

ATHENS, 24 OCT

Former Liverpool manager Rafa Benitez has been hired to coach Panathinaikos on a deal that Greek media reported to be the country's highest-ever salary for a coach. The struggling Athens club, which enters the weekend in seventh place in the 14-team Greek Super League, announced Friday that the well-traveled Spaniard signed a contract that reportedly extends to 2027. Local media reported the deal is worth close to 4 million euros ($4.6 million) per season and includes an option to extend for an additional season. Benitez was Chelsea's interim manager when the Blues won the Europa League title in 2013. —*PTI*

Pak withdraws its team from Junior Hockey WC in India

NEW DELHI, 24 OCT

Pakistan has pulled out of the Junior Hockey World Cup to be held in India in November-December, the International Hockey Federation (FIH) confirmed to PTI on Friday.

FIH said Pakistan's replacement team for the November 28-December 28 event, to be held in Chennai and Madurai, will be announced soon.

"We can confirm that the Pakistan Hockey Federation has notified the International Hockey Federation (FIH) that its team initially qualified for the upcoming FIH Hockey Men's Junior World Cup Tamil Nadu 2025 won't participate eventually," FIH said in a statement released to PTI.

"The team replacing Pakistan for this event will be announced soon," the statement added. Pakistan was placed in Group B alongside India, Chile, and Switzerland, and it remains to be seen which team replaces them.

This is the second event in India that Pakistan has pulled out from after the men's Asia Cup in Rajgir, Bihar, held from August 29 to September 7 this year.

The Indian government recently announced a new policy under which it will not engage in bilateral sporting contests with Pakistan but will continue to compete against them in multi-nation tournaments.

No Knowledge says Hockey India

Hockey India, however, said it has no clue about Pakistan's withdrawal.

"We have no information from FIH that Pakistan has withdrawn. I had a conversation with Pakistan Hockey Federation officials a month-and-a half-back, and they had confirmed their participation," HI secretary general Bholanth Singh told PTI.

"What transpired after that, I do not know. Our duty is to conduct the best tournament as hosts and hope India wins the title. It is now up to FIH to announce a replacement for Pakistan." —*PTI*

India fret over bowling attack in Ro-Ko's Australian swansong

Shubman Gill and Virat Kohli are both due for a big knock

SYDNEY, 24 OCT

The emotional quotient will be at an all-time high with a lot of moistened eyes expected to witness an embattled Virat Kohli and his partner in many a fight, Rohit Sharma, playing what could be their last appearance on Australian soil in the third ODI, here on Saturday.

While Rohit Sharma has rightfully earned some breathing space with a fighting 73 off 97 balls, albeit in a lost cause, Kohli's back-to-back ducks, his first ever in international cricket, have definitely made his die-hard fans contemplate whether this is the beginning of the end.

Rohit first came here for the CB Series in 2007-08, while Kohli's first tour with the senior team was in the 2011-12 season, when he made an instant impact with a Test century at Adelaide.

With no ODI series in Australia in the next two years, it is impossible to think that the duo will again be seen Down Under in India blues.

Whether Kohli, in particular, continues to play post Australia series is a matter of conjecture, but the final ODI at the iconic SCG will be more than a mere "dead rubber".

However, at SCG, the fans would want those punchy cover drives to come out of the closet and a few of those on-drives, and the inside-out lofted shot over extra cover from the modern-day legend.

The match is of consequence as the Gautam Gambhir-coached Indian team looks to avoid a 0-3 whitewash, which will certainly not look great, although the ODI World Cup is a good two years away.

To make matters worse, in the last five ODIs between India and Australia at the SCG, the 'Men in Blue' have won only once.

Skipper Shubman Gill and Kohli are both due for a big knock, and Gambhir will expect both to fire in the final game. —*PTI*

INDIA VS AUSTRALIA

INDIA vs AUSTRALIA
Match starts at
9.00 am IST

HEAD TO HEAD AT PERTH

PLAYED:	154
AUS Won:	86
INDIA Won:	58
NO RESULT:	10

Shubman Gill and Virat Kohli
PHOTO: PTI

Glenn Maxwell set to return for T20I series

Charismatic Australian all-rounder Glenn Maxwell is set to return for the T20I series against India after recovering from a fractured wrist, while young pacer Mahli Beardman is a surprise pick in the squad for the high-stakes clash beginning in Canberra on 29 October. The five-match T20I series, to be played after the ongoing ODIs, will see the 37-year-old Maxwell and Beardman available for selection for the last three games, while pace stalwart Josh Hazlewood and bowling allrounder Sean Abbott will be available for the first two and three games, respectively.

WOMEN'S WORLD CUP

Alyssa's injury in focus as Australia face South Africa

INDORE, 24 OCT

Australia would be hoping their "three-in-one" skipper Alyssa Healy is fit and raring to go in the top-of-the-table Women's World Cup clash here on Saturday against South Africa, who have displayed remarkable resilience and fortitude to emerge as strong contenders for the prestigious trophy.

Healy, who performs the triple role of captain, opener, and wicketkeeper, had suffered a calf injury during training ahead of the match against England here on Wednesday.

With Tahlia McGrath leading the seven-time champions to a big win against the arch-rivals.

With the Proteas showing the intent to go the distance this time around by winning five consecutive games after the 10-wicket humiliation by England in the opener.

The 35-year-old Healy's fitness becomes all the more important to counter the threat, as she has been in great touch with the bat in the tournament.

Healy scored back-to-back centuries against India and Bangladesh, which puts her third in the list of highest run-getters in the ongoing tournament behind India's Smriti Mandhana and Pratika Rawal despite playing two fewer games.

Australia vs South Africa
Match starts at
3.00 pm IST

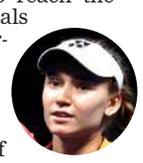
India can be at forefront of where women's cricket can go: Devine

With WPL finding its pride of place in the calendar, India in the future can be at the forefront of where women's cricket can potentially reach, legendary New Zealand skipper Sophie Devine said on Friday after her team's defeat to India, which dashed their hopes of reaching the World Cup semi-final. Devine, who captained New Zealand in her fifth World Cup, is set to retire from ODIs on Sunday as the White Ferns crashed out of the race to the semifinals with a huge loss to India here. "We've got to be realistic about it (that) these things don't happen overnight. —*PTI*

Pan Pacific Open 2025: Rybakina seals WTA Finals spot

PARIS, 24 OCT

Elena Rybakina clinched the eighth and last spot at next month's WTA Finals when she beat Victoria Mboko 6-3, 7-6(4) on Friday to reach the Pan Pacific semifinals in Tokyo. The former Wimbledon champion joins the elite field in Saudi Arabia after a successful run of form that also saw her win the Ningbo Open in China last week. Kazakhstan's Rybakina, the number two seed in Tokyo, jumped out to an early lead against Canada's Mboko and fought off her opponent's attempts to recover in the second set. —*PTI*



Ranji Trophy: Karnataka eye big outing from batters against Goa

RAJKOT, 24 OCT

After squandering a golden chance to garner three points against Saurashtra, Karnataka will be looking to pocket as many points as possible against a confident Goa at Shimoga.

On paper, Karnataka are firm favorites to gain at least three points, but the way Goa hammered Chandigarh for an innings victory underlines that they are no longer mere pushovers. They have some proven performers like Lalit Yadav, Darshan Misal, and Suyash Prabhudesai who can challenge any team on their day. Karnataka, on the other hand, will eye some big runs from their premier batters to pile pressure on Goa.

Skipper Mayank Agarwal, Devdutt Padikkal, Karun Nair, and R. Smaran all reached fifties against Saurashtra without converting them into a big score. On the bowling front, they have enough resources in Shreyas Gopal, Shikhar Shetty, and Mohsin Khan to keep the Goa batters on tenterhooks. In other Group B matches, last year's runners-up Kerala will face Punjab at Mullanpur, while Chandigarh will be up against Maharashtra at home. Saurashtra will be bolstered by the presence of India all-rounder Ravindra Jadeja against a strong Madhya Pradesh when the second round of the Ranji Trophy Elite Group B matches begins across the centers from Saturday. —*PTI*

MAYANK AGARWAL AND DEVDUTT PADIKKAL PHOTO: PTI

Pakistan ended the Women's World Cup winless as they suffered a third washout across their last four outings PHOTO: PTI

Rain washes out SL vs Pakistan match

COLOMBO, 24 OCT

Rain once again played spoilsport at the R Premadasa Stadium, as the ICC Women's World Cup match between Sri Lanka and Pakistan was abandoned here on Friday.

When an unrelenting downpour washed the Khettarama for a second time, Pakistan, after being asked to bat first, were 18 without loss in 4.2 overs.

It was also the fifth washout out of 11 matches at this venue of this tournament, raising questions over its planning.

It's a no-brainer that the Northeast monsoon hits the region during this time, yet the organisers went ahead with the schedule, leaving teams and fans at the mercy of the elements.

The abandoned matches also affected Sri Lanka's hopes to make the semifinals, as the hosts finished fifth in the eight-team table with five points from one win, three losses, and three washouts.

Pakistan has just two points from four losses and three no-results, as they ended the campaign without a win in seven matches.

The toss was delayed for more than three hours as the ground staff scrambled around with covers amid strong winds and repeated pitch inspections. —*PTI*

RISING STAR ATIQA MIR JOINS COTFA'S ELITE ROSTER

LONDON, 24 OCT

The Formula 1 Academy has broadened its support for India's emerging racing talent, Atiqa Mir, by selecting her for the new Champions of the Future Academy Program (COTFA) UAE, announced on Friday.

The 10-year-old will receive backing from the F1 Academy for the national karting championship in the UAE.

This is in addition to the support she already enjoys for various other competitions, including the international COTFA series courtesy of the Discover Your Drive (DYD) program.

Atiqa, who recently secured a victory in the RMC Championship, is currently racing in the MENA Nations Cup in Qatar and is notably the first Indian to receive technical and financial support from Formula 1. —*PTI*

Multan Sultans owner tears up PCB legal notice in public

KARACHI, 24 OCT

Pakistan Super League franchise Multan Sultans' owner Ali Tareen tore up a legal notice sent to him by the PCB, threatening to blacklist him and terminate the contract of his team in a recorded video.

The feud between Ali Tareen and the PCB has now blown up publicly after it was revealed on Thursday that the board had sent a notice in which they had asked him to publicly retract and apologise for his critical comments about the way the PSL has been run by the PCB, or his franchise contract would be cancelled.

The notice was sent after Tareen, who belongs to a powerful and wealthy business and political family, had several times questioned the success of the PSL as claimed by the PCB and the way it was managing the league on social media and on podcasts.

However, instead of remaining quiet after the receipt of the notice last month and once it was made public, Tareen has come out all guns firing and openly mocked the PCB officials in a video trending on social media, where the majority have supported his stance. —*PTI*

MAFIA-LINKED POKER GAMES

NBA stars among dozens arrested for gambling

NEW YORK, 24 OCT

An NBA player and coach are among dozens of people arrested as part of a sweeping FBI investigation into illegal sports betting and allegedly rigged, mafia-linked poker games.

Miami Heat player Terry Rozier and Portland Trail Blazers head coach Chauncey Billups were named by federal prosecutors in two separate indictments on Thursday. Both men deny the allegations.

Rozier, 31, is among six people arrested over alleged betting irregularities. They include NBA players accused of faking injuries to influence gambling markets.

Billups, a Hall of Fame player turned coach, is one of 31 people charged in a separate illegal poker game case involving retired players and the mafia.

Portland coach Chauncey Billups was charged with participating in a conspiracy to fix high-stakes card games tied to La Cosa Nostra organized crime families that cheated unsuspecting gamblers out of at least $7 million. Heat guard Terry Rozier was accused in a separate scheme of exploiting private information about players to win bets on NBA games. The two indictments unsealed in New York create a massive cloud for the NBA which opened its season this week and show how certain types of wagers are vulnerable to massive fraud in the growing, multibillion-dollar legal sports-betting industry. "My message to the defendants who've been rounded up today is this: Your winning streak has ended," Nocella said. "Your luck has run out."

That case, which prosecutors said involved four of the five major crime families in New York, uncovered an alleged scheme to lure victims into playing rigged poker games alongside high-profile sports stars before stealing millions of dollars. —*PTI*

Head coach Chauncey Billups
PHOTO: X/@NBA